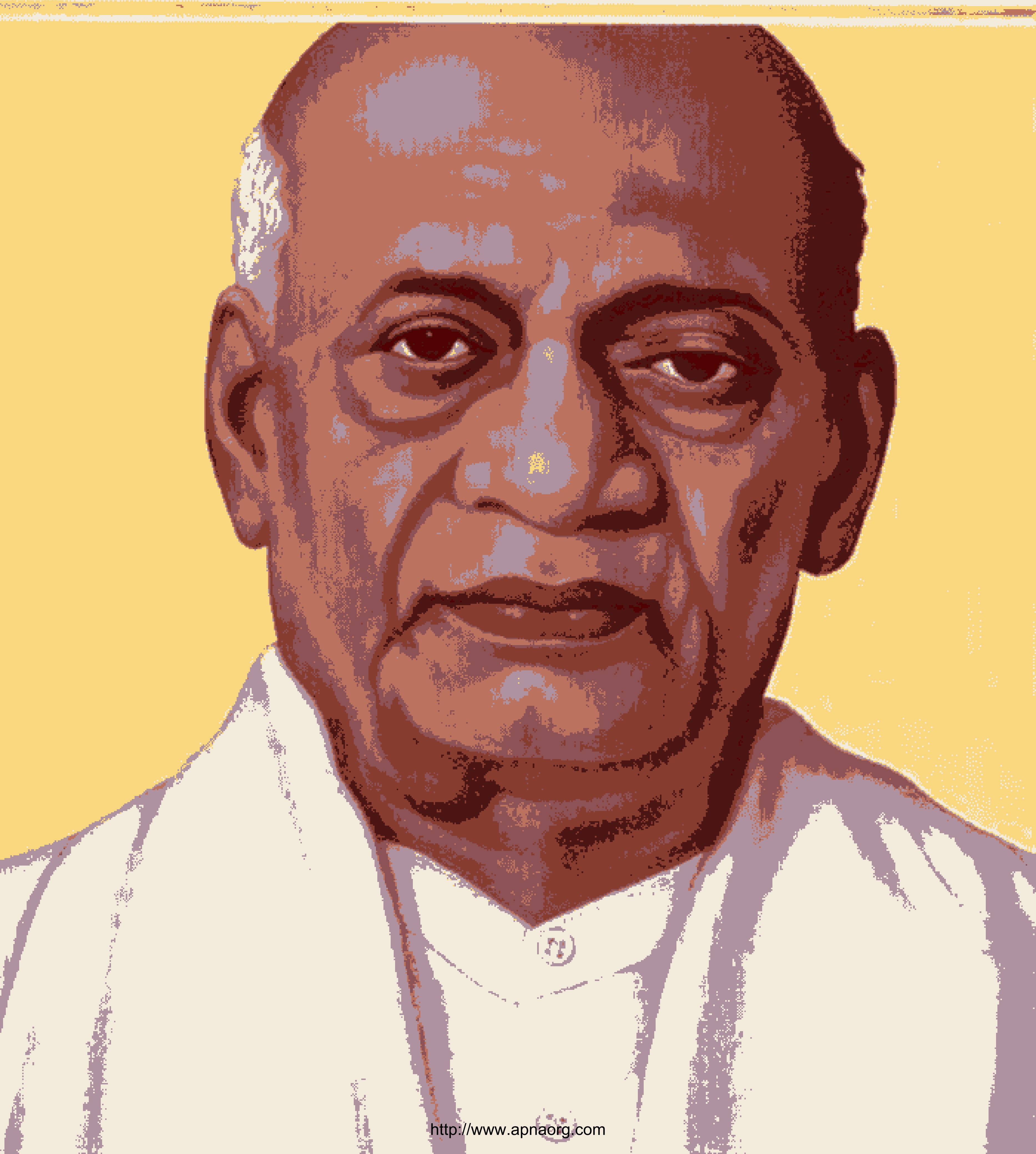
MY REMINISCENCES OF SARADR PATEL

(Volume 2)

V. Shankar



My Reminiscences of Sardar Patel

VOLUME II

V. SHANKAR

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To one who in later years has meant so much to me and has been a source of affection and inspiration

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Fifteen

1949 : The Year of Achievements

SARDAR SELDOM looked back; he was so conscious of the fleeting time that when 1949 was rung in he was in a very optimistic mood. During an hour long talk with me at the end of the Congress Session he was in a relaxed frame of mind. He referred to three topics which seemed to occupy his mind. One was the formation of a Greater Rajasthan on which he had set his heart from the beginning; the second was the bringing in of all the States under one constitutional umbrella instead of separate constitutional structures that were contemplated earlier; and the third was laying the foundations of economic progress. To fulfil the first objective he had planned a visit to Udaipur in mid-January at the time of the Jaipur Congress.

Rajasthan politically was no less a jig-saw puzzle than it was territorially. The local *Praja Mandals* in the past had mostly developed local patriotism of a high order; their vision was very limited. At the same time, two of the Rajasthan leaders had dreams larger than their respective States. They were Jai Narayan Vyas of Jodhpur and Hiralal Shastri of Jaipur. A third budding leader from Udaipur, Mohan Lal Sukhadia had impressed Sardar as a man of the future but he was still Junior in the leadership hierarchy, the top position among Udaipur leaders being occupied by Manikya Lal Verma, Chief Minister of the Rajasthan Union. The idea of a Greater Rajasthan began to inspire political leadership in all its different regions as soon as it was realised that it was on the cards.

Sardar decided on a two-pronged attack. He sent V.P. Menon to negotiate with the Rulers of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Udaipur and persuade them to accept the idea in principle so that he could make an announcement during his forthcoming visit. At the same time he summoned all the political leaders to Udaipur to accompany him during his tours. Both lines of attack proved successful, and Sardar was able to announce the general agreement for the formation of Greater Rajasthan at a public meeting in Udaipur on 14 January 1949. The announcement was received with enthusiasm and joy. It had been preceded by some very skilful negotiations conducted by V.P. Menon, and by long discussions between Sardar and the Rajasthan leaders. Many problems of integration had been successfully tackled in both the negotiations but the thorniest issue namely, the choice of the Chief Minister still remained; the decision was left to Sardar but the general expectation was that Jai Narayan Vyas would be selected.

Another problem was the question of Sirohi. The Political Department's

choice of a minor Ruler had been attacked both locally and outside. The Maharani of Nawanagar who came from the House of Sirohi had complained to Sardar bitterly about the choice and Sardar felt that there was a great deal to be said for her point of view; at the same time it was not easy to unsettle a settled fact. Political opinion in Sirohi under the leadership of Gokulbhai Bhat was also in line with the Maharani's point of view.

There was another problem regarding the State itself. Sirohi had Mount Abu within its domains, and both Gujarat and Rajasthan were contenders for this hill-station. Mount Abu as the headquarters oft he Resident for Rajputana States had become the focal point for all Rajputana States while Gujarat had no separate entity at the time to have acquired any foothold barring that of a large number of summer holiday-makers. A strong feeling was expressed that Sirohi should remain in Rajasthan. However, the matter was not one of immediate concern and consequently it did not assume any critical importance at the time.

The visit to Udaipur was important from another point of view. Sardar was a great admirer of Rana Pratap and had eagerly desired to visit Chitor. We arranged for a special train to take him from Udaipur to Chitor so that he could have detailed talks with the Rajasthan leaders during the rail journey. As we went up the drive to the fort, each point or place of historical importance was explained to him either by me or the Rajasthan Union Official -the story of Patta and of Jaimal shot by Akbar himself as he was supervising the repairs to the ramparts blown up by gunpowder, the siege of Alauddin and the story of how Padmini outwitted him with disastrous consequences for herself, her husband Bhim Singh and herself being besieged inside the Fort; these and other tales were told in all their vividness. When we reached the top of the plateau Sardar was greeted with an eyesore of a modern structure which housed the Police Training School. He was unhappy that it had been constructed among historical monuments of antiquity. He directed Manikya Lal Verma to have the school removed and instead to convert the building into a museum of the relics of Chitor.

He went to all the famous landmarks on the plateau—Padmini's palace situated near a lake reminding one of the island of Sinhaldweep from where she was believed to have come, other palaces, the elaborate system of water storage and the Mirabai Temple. But the *piece de resistance* was the plac: revered and venerated throughout history, where Padmini with her lady companions performed the heroic feat of *Jauhar* (self-immolation) to avoid capture by victorious invaders who had no regard for the honour of women, and to whom the Rajput traditions of chivalry were an anathema. Sardar became suddenly thoughtful and thinking that he was lost in thought, recapitulating events, I decided to go down the steps to investigate the site But unfortunately I slipped on the steps. Though I recovered soon, Sardar's sense of humour got the better of him. He remarked: 'Be careful otherwise you might imagine yourself sharing Padmini's fate!' I made a hasty climb up and joined him the next minute. It is curious how Sardar without much knowledge of history had both a sense of and thirst

for the subject and listened with rapt attention to the many incidents in India's history which I recounted to him from my own knowledge. He used to become enthusiastic or thoughtful as the story merited, but never failed to emphasise our shortcomings and the weaknesses which led to our downfall or decline. I have no doubt that in determining the shape of things to come he was greatly influenced by the lessons that history taught him. On a later occasion I was to get even a greater proof of his introspection.

On his return to Delhi Sardar faced a problem which caused him much mental anguish and I discovered later that I was the unwitting cause of it. His Home Secretary H. V. R. Iengar came to see him and had a long discussion after which I found him morose; and Iengar himself seemed somewhat cold to me. It was not my habit to sit with Sardar when his Secretaries came to see him unless I was required or happened to be with him when they came. But Maniben, his daughter used to be in attendance, not so much to know what took place as to be available in case of need or to drop a hint to terminate the discussion in time for the next engagement. Maniben was also unusually reticent. I remained, happily ignorant of what had transpired until I was asked to send for Shankar Prasad, who was then the Chief Commissioner of Delhi. I then thought that there was perhaps some tiff between the Chief Commissioner and the Home Secretary and matters had come to a head.

When Shankar Prasad came I asked him about it and he told me that indeed, this was the case. However, I did not go into the details though I was somewhat mystified by Sardar's reserve. After he had a talk with Shankar Prasad he called me and came out with the story. In connection with that tiff which seemed to involve the relationship between the Chief Commissioner and Home Secretary—a relationship of equality in status and not subordination of the former to the latter—it seemed that Iengar had complained to Sardar about my role in the affairs of State, implying that I was butting in between him and Sardar, and that in this particular case, Shankar Prasad had been emboldened because of his close friendship with me. He also complained that I was entering into direct contact with the Chief Commissioner to the prejudice of his own position. Sardar had tried to disillusion him on those points and on the issues involved but even after discussion with him, Iengar, had adhered to the line he had previously taken; but, when Iengar faced him with a request to let him proceed on leave, Sardar was greatly hurt.

Sardar told me that never in his life had he come across a subordinate of his who had asked to go out of dissatisfaction with what he had instructed or decided. I then sized up the situation from my own knowledge of Iengar; I had known him intimately since we were together in the Bombay Secretariat during 1939-41 and also since he came to Delhi. I knew that what was hurting him was not so much the merits of the case as his personal grievance against me and his imagined loss of prestige. I found Sardar in distress; at the same time he was sure of the correctness of his

decision. I told him not to worry about it and that I would myself take a hand in it. It was then that I was told by Sardar that even earlier he had come to know from another source that Iengar harboured the wrong impression that I had too much say in the affairs in his charge. Even as early as March 1948 Rajkumari Amrit Kaur had reported to him that Iengar had told her that Sardar was entirely in my hands, but Rajkumari had flately contradicted this from her own personal knowledge.

I then wrote a personal letter to Iengar rebutting the impression he had formed; explaining how matters had been handled by Sardar himself in discussion with Shankar Prasad at the latter's request; recalling my past association with him as Deputy Secretary in the Bombay Finance Department; and telling him how, far from obstructing his path, I had on occasions tried my best to support him. I explained that, contrary to Iengar's impression, Sardar was a man who had a mind of his own. The clouds of suspicion thereafter lifted and I was able to report that Iengar was now quite satisfied, and that Sardar need not worry about the problem any more. Sardar was visibly cheered at the glad tidings. This incident shows how sensitive Sardar was on the question of his relationship with his subordinates and also how wrong the myth, sedulously spread by interested parties was, to the effect that I pulled the strings while Sardar was a willing puppet. I shall recall at a later stage another victim of that myth no less a person than the Prime Minister himself.

V. P. Menon was during this period hot on the trail of negotiations for the formation of the Greater Rajasthan Union. Negotiations with the Rulers were difficult enough but those with popular leaders were even more so. I doubt if in any other part of India was there such inter-ruler jealousy as in Rajasthan. The ruler of Udaipur held the affection of the people because of his family's history of resistance to Muslim invaders and the sacrifices his illustrious House had made in the case of Hinduism and Hindu rulers. It is true that it had not been able to resist the Maratha hordes or British forces, but it had managed to retain the prestige and glory imparted by a succession of chivalrous Rulers for an unprecedented period of more than four centuries. The Maharana though under severe physical disability was understandably sensitive about his position in the Union. He was a popular and progressive Ruler who had his people solidly behind him.

The clash came with the House of Jaipur which had a long tradition of having avoided wars while promoting the prosperity of the State and the people. The ancestor of the Jaipur Ruler, Mirza Raja Jai Singh was the foremost general of Aurangzeb's time, who like his earlier predecessor, Raja Man Singh had fought for the Moghuls and distinguished himself in the campaign against Sivaji. Thwarted in his ambitions by the cunning of Aurangzeb, however, he through his son Ram Singh helped, so it is reported, in the escape of Sivaji from Delhi. But the fact remained that the House had matrimonial as well as military alliances with the Mughal Kings. Jodhpur and Bikaner also came in the same category and as such, in public esteem outside these States, commanded a place after Udaipur.

However, as a practical proposition, there was no doubt that Jaipur occupied a position of prime importance, with the other two a close second and third. Jaipur and Bikaner had both Rulers and Prime Ministers of remarkable ability. V. T. Krishnamachari and K. M. Panikkar were famous names both in their respective States and outside. V. T. Krishnamachari in particular was highly respected by Sardar because of, among other things, the bold stand he had taken on the question of the Maharaja of Baroda Sir Pratap Singh's second marriage; he commanded a position of his own in the Constituent Assembly. He was a gem of a man, and his urbanity, barring a tendency to explode on rare occasions, was a treat to watch. Sardar Panikkar's loyalty to any Chief of the time was unquestioned. He had a sharp intellect and his scholarship always lent a charm and distinction to his personality. As a diplomat, negotiator and the holder of offices of distinction in Patiala and Bikaner he had displayed the astuteness of Chanakya and the worldly prudence of Machiavelli.

As regards Jodhpur, the Maharaja had shown strength and independence of spirit, though tinged with immaturity, during his negotiations with Jinnah. But for our successful last-minute attempts to foil the latter's plan he would have been a minion of Pakistan. The incident had however shown that in his fiery youthful temperament there was a place for patriotism along with courage and some impishness. He was close to Sardar to whom his late father had brought him earlier to entrust him to his care. Sardar had something of a paternal interest in him and the Maharaja had full freedom of access to him. He was always proud to accompany Sardar in a spotless white jewel-buttoned coat and Jodhpurs with a coloured turban and a leather belt across his left shoulder replete with a revolver and cartridges.

As regards political leaders, Jai Narayan Vyas was undoubtedly the leading figure of Rajasthan; he had distinguished himself in the States Peoples Organisation where he came close to Pandit Nehru and was a good friend of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. His righthand man at the time was Mathura Das Mathur. Jai Narayan Vyas had an artistic temperament, the legacy of his previous days. He was shrewd and able but unfortunately unsure of himself and as such, amenable to advice which was not always disinterested. Unfortunately for both him and Mathura Das Mathur, some allegations had already been made against them, which, if true, would have made them unsuitable for public offices and Sardar had to be cautious in dealing with them. Moreover, the Maharaja of Jodhpur was hostile to him. To be fair to Jai Narayan Vyas, however, I must pay a tribute to his national outlook which went beyond the narrow confines of his State; although vigilant of Jodhpur's interests he also kept Rajasthan as well as the broader interests of India in mind. Manikya Lal Verma, the Prime Minister of the Rajasthan Union, was a political leader of average ability, liable to prejudices and preconceived notions and possessed of a grain of local patriotism as well as resistance to certain personalities. He and Mohan Lal Sukhadia were strong Udaipuris. Gokulbhai Bhatt from disputed Sirohi was at the time a leading figure in Rajasthan politics. He was close to Sardar and a frequent visitor to 1 Aurangzeb

Road; he was undoubtedly sincere but had a hard time between the other leaders of Rajasthan on one side and Sardar on the other Hiralal Shastri from Jaipur had managed to keep his separate identity among the leaders of Rajasthan due to his association with his institution at Banasthali. He had a towering personality and an independent outlook. He was quick to understand but slow to act, and straight and honest, he was not a man of the world like others. There was no doubt that his standing in politics was nowhere near that of Jai Narayan Vyas or Manikya Lal Verma. But Sardar liked him not for his ability but for his being free from political blemishes. Whatever their personal characteristics may have been, the fact remains that they were not inclined to spare each other when it came to the interests of their respective States, or to the patronage of their proteges, the number of whom was not negligible. Negotiations with them proved difficult and on one issue inconclusive, namely the issue of the Ministry

By about the end of February the negotiations had gone far enough to justify the hope that the Union would be formed shortly. The rivalries between the leading Ruling Houses had been tactfully solved by V.P. Menon and his aides. The issue of the position of Udaipur was solved satisfactorily with Sardar blessing the compromise solution of the Maharana being designated as *Maharaja-pramukh* with a handsome allowance, The Maharaja of Jaipur who was chosen as *Rajpramukh* agreed that he should be accorded precedence in all ceremonial functions. The date of inauguration was accordingly fixed for 30 March 1949.

The question of the formation of the Ministry, however, proved difficult, Sardar's choice fell on Hiralal Shastri, not so much on grounds of merit as by the fact that by a process of elimination he was the only one left. I have already mentioned the allegations against Jai Narayan Vyas. Apart from that, what counted him out was his leaning on some of his lieutenants whose actions and inclinations were not above question. As regards Manikya Lal Verma, his record as the Premier of Rajasthan Union was not a particularly distinguished one. He lacked political acumen and was somewhat pedantic and ancient in his attitude. Gokulbhai Bhatt was undoubtedly popular in the Congress hierarchy in Rajasthan. But he was not big enough. There was nothing against Hiralal Shastri and Sardar felt that in the circumstances prevailing, he could be safely relied on to adopt a non-partisan attitude and keep himself above the pulls of various sides to which others were subject. He discussed the matter with V.P. Menon and me. V.P. Menon fell in line with his choice. I was, however, somewhat doubtful whether Hiralal Shastri would be acceptable to other leaders. I had been in touch with the emissaries of various persons involved, particularly Mathura Das Mathur through whom I came to know about the working of Jai Narayan Vyas' mind. I told Sardar that it was very unlikely that others would willingly accept Hiralal Shastri; that there might be a core of resistance and at best the attitude would probably be of uneasy submission rather than of willing acquiescence. The decision was not, however, made known, and upto almost the end the Rajasthan leaders thought that Sardar's choice would fall on Jai Narayan Vyas.

It was in this atmosphere that preparations were made for the inauguration of the Union on 30 March 1949. On the 29th, we left for Jaipur in an IAF Dove plane, one of their recent acquisitions, a two-engined aircraft designed to carry small parties. Sardar was restricted to flying at a height not exceeding 3,000 ft. The party consisted of Sardar, Maniben, His Highness Maharaja of Jodhpur and myself. The idea was that after reaching Jaipur, Sardar would send for the political leaders of Rajasthan and in a discussion, persuade them to agree to the choice of Hiralal Shastri as leader, and to the formation of the Ministry. After flying some distance, we found that the upper cover of the engine was loose and open. The aircraft had, therefore, to come back and have the defect rectified. We flew up again but a while, one of the after engines began to cough and finally stopped. We were passing over the range of hills along the valleys with meandering streams. Beyond Alwar the plane began to lose height. The pilot successfully manoeuvred the plane along the valleys though we, who were observing the landscape, had sometimes an uneasy feeling that it might skirt along and dash against some of the hillsides. It was after some time that the radio officer came to me and told me that the plane was losing height and that we would have to force-land at a convenient spot. The pilot Bhim Rao was thinking how best to ensure that the plane kept a straight course along the ravines. I asked the radio officer what the exercise in this course of forced landing would be. I was told that they would try to select as far as possible, a site on which a successful belly landing could be made but they could not guarantee this. In the event of their being forced to land on a stony ground, there was danger of fuel tanks catching fire. There was also a possibility of a short-circuit, and fire being caused thereby. He therefore advised that as soon as we landed, we should try to get out of the exit which curiously enough in that aircraft was in the ceiling and not, as is generally the case. on the sides. After that we resigned ourselves to our fate, but never succumbed to the possibility of the tragic moments that could have been ahead of us. In fact, on the one hand we were looking out to see how the land lay in order to detect a possible landing site; on the other, we were joking with each other. I was particularly hard on the poor Maharaja of Jodhpur whose corpulence was the butt-end of my jokes. Much to Sardar's amusement, I told him that he would have to be the last because if his figure got stuck in the exit, there would be no chance of anybody else getting through. Sardar was unruffled and unmoved. Maniben had an anxious look about her but none of us was in a state of panic. Whilst we were still joking with each other came a message. The pilot invited me to the cockpit and pointed out a sandy patch along the stream where he had decided we were to land. He again told me not to wasteti me in opening the door but to make for the exit as soon as the plane came to a halt. I came back to my seat and we all tightened our seat belts and prepared ourselves for the impact of the landing. A few minutes more, and with a noisy thud the plane landed on the sandy patch. We immediately unfastened belts and while others were preparing to get out from the exit I decide to try the front door; fortunately it yielded to pressure I

immediately opened it and we all made our exit through the normal door. The pilot came out too and tendered his apologies to Sardar. For a time we rested underneath a tree. We espied a village on a small hill some distance away. While we were resting, the pilot and the radio officer went to the village and all the village folk came along to see us. In the meantime it was nearing sunset. Since the radio communication had failed, we had no means of informing Delhi or Jaipur that we were safe. With the help of the villagers we found our bearings and came to know that we were several miles from the nearest place Sikar on the main road. The villagers brought a few cots on which we sat down. Sardar stretched himself a bit but was calm and composed. We began to devise ways and means of sending information so that it would reach Delhi or Jaipur. we realised that very soon the news would get around and the whole country would be in a state of panic. Sardar stood for so much in the life of the country that they would not know what to do without him. We tried to send some news to Sikar through a horse-rider going there. We were also looking in the direction of the road to see if any cars were coming. The road was several miles away and because of Sardar's heart trouble we could not make him walk. There was no other means of transport available which could be used to take him to the roadside. We had no alternative therefore but to bide our time. In the meantime, as sunset came, we lighted some flares on the nearby hill to make sure that some passing aircraft could detect us. We were at a loss how to pass our time and made use of the only entertainment that was available, namely a troupe of performers of physical feats known as *Nuts*. They entertained us, as also a group of boys and girls who tried to put up a folk music and dance show. After some time we found some car headlights approaching us from a distance. I then asked Sardar whether he could walk slowly along so that we could be as near the approaching cars as possible. He agreed and after thanking the villagers and giving the boys and girls and the performers some *bakshish* we trudged along towards the approaching lights. Fortunately, beyond the cultivated portion which stretched up to a few furlongs there was an open barren land for some distance. Two or three cars came and stopped there; in the leading car, K. B. Lall, who was then Adviser to the Matsya Union and was previously the Diwan of Alwar State after the enforced resignation of N. B. Khare, was seated travelling from Alwar to Jaipur. They had got the news of our whereabouts at Sikar and decided to make for the spot. We then got into the car and left for Jaipur taking care on the way to leave a message so that Jaipur could be informed. However, no information could reach Jaipur by the time we reached there nearer 11 o'clock.

We took everybody, the Maharaja and others by surprise. Meanwhile as we had expected the news of the missing plane had been announced by the All India Radio and the whole country was in a state of panic. The Prime Minister had sent for V. P. Menon. From all accounts he was in a state of nervous apprehension, fearing the worst. This was latter confirmed to me by one of his aides. Pandit Nehru was nervously walking up and down with

moist eyes and saying sometimes: 'What shall I do. He had so many strings in his hands.' I immediately booked a call to Delhi, got Pandit Nehru on the telephone and gave him the good news that Sardar was alive and well. He then wanted to talk to Sardar who came to the telephone and talked to him and it seemed that they exchanged jokes. We had had nothing to eat for some hours and consequently soon after dinner we retired for thenight. The ceremony was fixed the next morning, and consequently therewas no time for Sardar to have a meeting with the political leaders of Rajasthan before making an announcement about the Premiership of the Rajasthan Union. The announcement was made the next day by V.P. Menon during his discussion, and met with adverse reaction. The leaders showed their unwillingness to join the Ministry led by Hiralal Shastri. Consequently the next day Sardar at the time of the inauguration ceremony swore in only the *Rajpramukh* and the Premier of the Union

The inauguration was, however, a colourful event. The Maharaja of Jaipur insisted that we should all don Rajasthani dress. I had my usual *sherwani* and *chooridar pyjama:* only a turban was required. Consequently, His Highness sent turbans for all of us, namely, V. P. Menon, M.K. Vellodi, N.M. Buch and myself, and we appeared in the gathering in that apparel to which we were not used. However, we were none the worse for our experience, and both our turbans and heads were intact after the ceremony. Though the Rajasthan leaders did not participate in the Ministry, they participated in the ceremony which went off very well

The question of Sirohi has been referred to earlier. Sirohi was one of the several States in the Rajasthan Agency which was considered to belong to the Gujarati speaking area. Earlier, when the question came up of Sirohi being included among those States, due to the minority of its ruler, it was left unsettled, and Sirohi was left out of the merger of Gujarat States with the Province of Bombay. Gokulbhai Bhat who was the Adviser to the Dowager Maharani and the President of the Rajasthan Congress Committee, was in a difficult position. The Maharani, influenced by the Maharani of Nawanagar, was inclined to merge it with Bombay but there was a sizable vocal opinion in Sirohi for merger with Rajasthan which he, as President of the Rajasthan Provincial Congress Committee, could not disregard. In the meantime, the question of succession had become a live issue. The Government of India decided in March 1949 to appoint a Committee consisting of H. V. Divatia, Chief Justice of Saurashtra, and Maharajas of Jaipur and Kotah to enquire into the matter and report on the question of succession as between the minor Maharaja and a scion of the ruling family Shri Abhey Singhji. The Committee reported in favour of the latter and the Government of India recognised him as the Maharao, superceding the recognition by the Political Department of the succession of the minor Ruler. Owing to the separate existence of the State, a decision on the controversial issue as to whether it should be merged with Bombay or integrated with the Rajasthan Union was put off. Sardar was of the view that having regard to its history and the linguistic composition of the population it should be merged with Bombay. However, sensing

popular opinion in the whole of Rajasthan against such a move he decided to send V. P. Menon to assess the position on the spot Menon gave a report suggesting the division of the State into two, the Abu Road and Dilwara *tehsils* of Sirohi going to Bombay and the rest of the State being merged in Rajasthan. This was accepted and a formal order was issued under Section 290 A of the Government of India Act 1935. The Rajasthanis were not prepared to part with Mount Abu which they thought should belong to Rajasthan, forgetting that administratively it had been separate from the Sirohi State as well as Rajasthan, since it was being administered by the Political Department up to 15 August 1947 The position was rendered difficult because of the fact that Abu Road area in particular was a definitely Hindi-speaking territory while the rest of the State transferred to Bombay was mostly bilingual, as most areas on the borders of two States generally are. I had occasion as Collector of Palanpur District in 1954 to study the situation in depth both with reference to the linguistic composition regarding the watershed, particularly the river Western Banas which flowed into the Gujarat area of Palanpur district. I am convinced that if Mount Abu and Abu Road had also gone to Rajasthan and the rest of the area transferred to Gujarat, the solution would have been acceptable to the Rajasthan leaders. However, there was a great deal of antipathy for what was done on physical and other grounds and the matter was re-opened when the States Reorganisation Commission were seized with the matter. When P. C. Chaudhuri, Secretary-Member of the Commission, visited the spot, he was more or less of the same view as V.P. Menon. I took up the matter on a number of occassions with Justice Fazl-i-ali, who was the Chairman of the Commission, and explained to him the whole position but the forces working against the solution arrived at by the Ministry of States at the time were strongly opposed, and this opposition derived a great deal of strength from the Prime Minister. I knew that one of the members, K. M. Panikkar had taken a definite line in opposition to Sardar's solution for reasons which I will state elsewhere. By that time Govind Ballabh Pant had also joined the Central Government as Home Minister. In view of a letter from the Prime Minister to Gopalaswamy Ayyangar as Minister of State, in which the Prime Minister had said that Sirohi required to be looked into because in his view Sardar had been partial to Gujarat, I ventured to send Pant a note giving the history of the case and my own view and impressions formed after an objective assessment of the situation on the spot. I contested the Prime Minister's view and hoped that Govind Ballabh Pant would be able to have the matter looked into in the same objective manner. This assessment was however overlooked and therefore, what was done in 1949 was undone in 1956. It is however to the credit of the Rajasthanis that unlike other border inter-State river problems they have not interfered with the exploitation of the river water of the Western Banas for the development of Banaskantha area. I projected this approach when I was Collector of Palanpur in 1954 and I am very happy that I was instrumental in drawing both popular and Governmental attention to the potentialities of the scheme which has now fructified to the advantage of the former barren areas on both sides of the Banas.

II

There were two significant departures from the policy which Sardar had so far formulated in regard to the integration of States. Hitherto, we had restricted mergers in Provinces of non-viable States but had promoted merger of viable States into Unions of States and in the process had allocated to the Rulers of viable States a pre-eminent position of office and prestige. The extinction of viable States for purposes of merger into Provinces meant, however, the complete fading away of the Rulers and their leading an isolated existence shorn of public office or any demonstrable public position of privilege and responsibility. If we trace the development of Sardar's policy from his declaration of 5 July 1947, in which he had limited himself specifically to accession on Defence, External Affairs and Communications, to early 1949, we notice that it gradually but rapidly changed into democratisation and integration of non-viable States in December 1947; then it developed into formation of Unions of States even if it meant integration of viable States but with freedom to frame their own constitutions subject to the limitations provided in the Covenants (This policy began to take shape after March-April 1948); the imposition of the superintendence, direction and control of the Government of India followed in the wake of the formation of these Unions; then followed the enlargement of the field of accession of these Unions to the Centre in all subjects under the Central and Concurrent lists.

Two viable States, Baroda and Kolhapur maintained their integrity outside this process of integration. It was obvious, however, that neither of the two could have existed as independent entities for long and in both, as should have been expected by the Rulers, the stimulus for integration came from the people. Sardar's mind about Baroda had been made up towards the end of 1948 and the possibilities had been discussed with the local *Praja Mandal* leaders. The immediate provocation was provided by the eccentric behaviour of the Ruler of Baroda, Sir Pratap Singh. There had been a move for the introduction of a full responsible Government for some time which received added impetus from such behaviour. At the time of the Junagadh crisis, the Maharaja put extraordinary conditions to his assistance, including hegemony over Saurashtra and declaration as King of Gujarat as did the Nizam who had dreams of hegemony over Berar and Kingship of Hyderabad. Subsequently, he agreed to introduce responsible Government and to appoint Jivraj Mehta as Dewan but suddenly left for Europe leaving the finances of Baroda in a chaotic state through his unprincipled appropriations. When Jivraj Mehta revealed the state of affairs to the legislature, there was practically a revolt and a demand for the appointment of an Enquiry Officer.

The Maharaja returned post-haste and agreed to grant full responsible Government, to reimburse the State Treasury and prepare the full accounts of

the *Jawaharkhana* (The Jewellery Treasury): but he began to obstruct both the Government and the Special Officer appointed with his consent. Despite this, the Enquiry revealed a shocking state of affairs including the removal from the *Jawaharkhana* of valuable and historic pieces of jewellery. Jivraj Mehta, who is always ruthlessly thorough, did not fail to draw Sardar's attention to the Maharaja's extravagance. The result was that Sardar's patience ran out and he decided to visit Baroda in January 1949, fully determined to announce the merger of Baroda into Bombay Province He was deflected from that course by a last-minute act of penitence on the part of the Maharaja and of compassion on his own. He left it to the Maharaja to make the announcement after his visit which he did on 31 January 1949. In the resultant settlement, an agreement was reached for the return of both a major part of the cash withdrawn from the Treasury and of the jewellery removed from the *Jawaharkhana* The State actually merged on 1 May 1949.

Kolhapur, at the time of merger of the Deccan States, had been left out of the scheme due to its viability. I had the privilege of meeting the Ruler's predecessor at the Race Course in Bombay and Poona on a number of occasions. He invariably used to be accompanied by his sister Akka Saheb, the mother of the present Ruler who was then the Ruler of Dewas (Senior); she was reputed to be exercising a great deal of influence over the Maharaja. But there was perpetual trouble between him and the *Praja Mandal* of which, as far as I remember, the leading lights at the time of our dealings with the State were Bagal and Ratnappa Kumbhar. There was serious rioting in the State after Gandhiji's assassination and that, combined with the local challenges to the Maharaja's succession on the ground of his adoption by the widowed Maharani of Maharaja Raja Ram, began to spell trouble for the present Ruler. The Maharaja, a shrewd, intelligent and able person with his wits about him, was unfortunately not sufficiently attentive to the needs of the situation and due to the poor finances of the State an administrator had to be appointed. The officer chosen was V. Nanjappa, an ICS officer of the Bombay cadre who was to acquire fame as the rectifier of trouble in Warrangal and Nalgonda. The opposition gathered momentum and eventually the Maharaja was called to Delhi and persuaded to agree to merge the State with Bombay Province. The acquisition of Baroda in the North and Kolhapur in the South and Gujarat and Deccan States in between made the Bombay Province the object of envy of the other Provinces. I, with my loyalty to that Province during my service was happy at this outcome and when we went to Bombay later in the year, I was the recipient of many smiles from the Premier and Home Minister of the State.

By the end of March 1949, discussions in the Constituent Assembly and the Drafting Committee had progressed far enough to make it clear that in another six or seven months, the Constitution would be reaching its final stage. Two issues of a fundamental nature were yet to be solved. One was the question of the relationship of the Indian Republic with the U.K. and other countries of the Commonwealth. The other was the question of formation of an Andhra Province regarding which pressure was mounting. The

Congress President Pattabhi Sitaramayya had one or two discussions with Sardar. The first question involved the determination of our own attitude and then negotiations with the British Government and other Dominions while the second question posed internal problems of some complexity and far-reaching consequence.

On the question of the relationship of India with the U.K. and the Commonwealth, Mountbatten had been quite active at the exploratory stage and the Labour Government chose an influential and strong emissary in Krishna Menon. Pandit Nehru was not, however, quite responsive and Sardar was keeping his own counsel. However, Sardar's mind had already been made up much earlier. Even in the middle of the previous year, he had discussed the matter with V. P. Menon and myself in the context of our relations with Pakistan, and Pakistan continuing as a Dominion and as such a member of the Commonwealth, and also in the context of our dependence on the U.K. on so many matters of technological, scientific and industrial development. In those days the U.K. had considerable influence in shaping U.S. policy towards us; we had witnessed the harmful aspects of that influence in the Security Council discussions on Kashmir and we needed the beneficial aspects of the same influence in our economic development. Sardar was a fanatical idealist in regard to the economic development of India; almost all his speeches emphasised the need for quick progress and the tremendously intensive nation-wide efforts required to achieve it. He realised that in that gigantic effort we would need, in a substantial measure, active help and assistance of both the U.S.A. and U.K. At that stage, the U.S.S.R. was somewhat of a back number in financial assistance to other countries and our relations had not been formalised even on the diplomatic plane. In the circumstances, Sardar argued that the maintenance of friendly relations with both the U.S.A. and U.K. was vital to our economic progress. Moreover in the context of our past relationship with the U.K. and the goodwill and understanding generated by the last phase of negotiations preceding Independence and by Lord Mountbatten's Governor-Generalship, such friendly relations became virtually a mental preoccupation of both Pandit Nehru and Sardar. Above all, Sardar was greatly affected by our defence requirements being dependent on supplies from the U.K. and the desirability of preventing Pakistan from stealing a march over us so far as defence preparedness was concerned. Although the active phase of the Kashmir operations was over and the ceasefire and negotiations for an agreement on truce and plebiscite were in hand, we could not slide into a state of complacency.

However, Pandit Nehru was hesitant because joining the Commonwealth meant in his view, some dilution of our republican status. Acceptance of Commonwealth membership in his view was likely to be cited against him in contrast with his progressive views particularly on imperialism and colonialism. He was sensitive, on the point of any association, howsoever remote with countries of a colonial or imperialist past, whatever their present incarnation might be. This sensitiveness had a profound influence on his foreign policy. Temperamentally he was of a type who would not like to be seen

with such companions let alone enter into any relationship with them. The history of the Commonwealth with its imperialist past—it used to be known as the Imperial Conference—repelled him. Despite Mountbatten's advocacy and Krishna Menon's able championship of the cause of Commonwealth association, Pandit Nehru's eternal conflict between mind and heart was quite evident on this issue. Eventually Sardar's clear-cut enunciation of the advantages of such a relationship under the prevailing conditions of power politics, the stage of our economic development, our economic needs, the drastic change in the character of the Commonwealth, our relationship with Pakistan, the danger of our being isolated and the position under the Statute of Westminster, won the day.

Sardar's support to a line of action on which Pandit Nehru was intellectually willing but emotionally constrained, used to be decisive. It was a treat to see what a revitalising effect his discussion with Sardar used to have when his mind was in a state of perplexity. I have often seen Pandit Nehru enter the room with a quickstep and knitted eye brows, deep in thought with his eyes focused on the ground. At the end of the discussion he used to come out relaxed and smiling, with a slow gait and taking note of the presence of others. Such was the case after the final discussion on this issue and he not only agreed to go but began to prepare for the conference convened by Attlee in London to deal with the issues arising out of the participation of India, a Republic, in a Commonwealth presided over, even though symbolically, by a Crowned Head. It was quite clear to Sardar and myself, however, that he would need considerable propping up even in London.

And this proved to be the case. At every stage of his discussions in the Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, Pandit Nehru used to send long telegrams giving detailed points for Sardar's consideration and awaited prompt replies. Once Sardar's mind was made up he used to be very quick in sorting out points of detail which might baffle solution and such was the case here as well. On one point Pandit Nehru was particularly in difficulties—about recognising the Queen as the Head of Commonwealth. Would it not dilute our Republican character and would we not be criticised on that account? Sardar's reply was quite clear and unambiguous. We were recognising the Queen as the Head of the Commonwealth not in her capacity as Queen but as Head of State in the U. K. For historical reasons as well as in view of its prominence among the countries of the Commonwealth, the U. K. was entitled to a permanent headship of the Commonwealth and if constitutionally its Head was a Monarch we could not help it and had to accept it. The main hurdle being crossed, the rest was not so difficult and by a skilful use of ideas and language, the conference succeded in hammering out an acceptable formula. India then agreed to become, and was eagerly accepted as, a member of the Commonwealth despite its Constitution as a Republic. The decision was hailed as a triumph of the flexibility of the Commonwealth structure and the statesmanship of it's Prime Ministers. Both those who participated in the Conference and public opinion in the countries concerned, recognised the notable contribution India had made through

Panditji to the successful conclusion of the Conference and the strength which India's membership would provide. The change was no less significant to the structure of the Commonwealth than the one made by the Statute of Westminster.

But so far as Panditji was concerned, his greatest difficulty had yet to be faced. How was the decision to be sold to the public in India which had been fed for years on ideas always critical and sometimes condemnatory of the Commonwealth whose membership consisted of countries with a colonial or imperialist past and one of whom namely, South Africa, followed an anti-Indian and segregationist policy? For some strange reason, Pandit Nehru felt himself unequal to the task and cabled Sardar to hold a Press Conference at which he should announce the decision in advance of Nehru's return, Sardar agreed without hesitation. A Press Conference was accordingly convened and Sardar announced and explained the decision with his usual frankness, forthrightness and persuasive power. The decision was welcomed by all except one or two journalists who opposed it. Thereafter, when Pandit Nehru returned, it was to a country which had been prepared for the decision and showered him with bouquets and garlands on his arrival instead of the derisive shouts and grim sullenness which he had probably anticipated.

The second question of the formation of linguistic Provinces was a legacy of the Congress Constitution which was based on regional languages. But the immediate problem was that of formation of Andhra out of the existing Madras Presidency. The separation raised important questions of the capital, the division of Madras, the High Court and the financial viability of the new Province. The question of linguistic Provinces also loomed large in the Constituent Assembly and the best way out was considered to be to refer it to a Committee of three consisting of Pandit Nehru, Sardar and the Congress President, Pattabhi Sitaramayya. The Committee had several meetings in which discussions were dominated by Sardar. He evolved an approach which, while conceding linguistic Provinces in principle, appeared to withdraw it in details. The concession was hedged in with conditions which at that time Andhra, which was the only proposal that was accepted as an immediate issue, was unable to fulfil. The report of the Committee was drafted by Pandit Nehru who had fallen in line with Sardar's approach, and sent to Sardar for comments. Sardar went through it and gave it to me to go through it and discuss. He asked me to mark the changes, I suggested, in pencil. I did so and he then went over the draft again. He then discussed it with me and suggested some further changes including a couple of paragraphs which spelt out the conditions even more rigidly. After Pandit Nehru had revised the draft in the light of proposed changes, he sent it to Sardar for getting Pattabhi Sitaramayya's signature. Sardar sent for him and had him sign it in his presence after he had gone through the draft and accepted it.

The year since his illness in March 1948 had thus been one of the most fruitful and promising in his life and in the life of the country. A great deal had been avoided and much more had been achieved. Honours for and

recognition of his achievements had come in profusion. The map of India had been changed drastically; the distinction between the pink and the yellow had been practically obliterated. The 'ulcer in the abdomen of India' (that is how Sardar described the Hyderabad problem) had been operated upon and had healed completely. Independence had not only been consolidated but had also been strengthened and the country was getting ready to give itself a Constitution and to change its status from the Queen's Dominion to a Republic, while remaining a member of the Commonwealth with the Queen at its head. The administrative fabric had not only been rebuilt but had also begun to absorb the impact of the new regime. Internal threats to stability and peace had been successfully faced. In foreign affairs, the foundations of a dynamic and independent foreign policy and foreign institutional set-up had been well and truly laid.

The last bastions of old-world princedoms had also fallen under the blast of the new wind of change. The Nawab of Bhopal, who had held out as long as he could at the time of accession, held out longer on the question of integration but eventually gave in with good grace. This was only after securing special consideration. His illusion of a high office in Pakistan had been dispelled and the only casualty was his eldest daughter and heir-apparent who sought a haven in Pakistan. His confidante Shoaib Qureshi who was at one time the editor of *Independence* during the Khilafat days and had a nationalist past, followed the call of his conscience to Pakistan. Such were the tragic shifts of loyalty in those critical and fateful days examples which unfortunately have not ceased to be followed even up to the present day. Similarly the small hill States of the old Punjab Agency also yielded to the prevailing winds and the Province of Himachal was formed out of them, and placed under a Chief Commissioner. Much to the disappointment of the former *Praja Mandal* leader of this area and now Chief Minister of the State, Y. S. Parmar, Sardar put off the formation of a popular Ministry as he rightly felt that a process of integration political among those isolated States, administrative in those backward spots, and psychological among the population— must precede such an eventuality. But he held out a promise, subsequently of an eventual Statehood should the financial hurdle be crossed: an assurance which was honoured only in 1971.

With the triumphs of integration in his pocket Sardar had to fulfil a long-awaited programme before he could leave for Dehra Dun. The Indian National Trade Union Congress which was a rival body of the All India Trade Union Congress but which could trace its roots to a period earlier than that of the latter was to hold its Second Session in Indore on 6 May 1949 and Sardar was to inaugurate the Session. For Sardar it was a mission undertaken to rehabilitate the organisation from tendencies which had crept into the organisation somewhat different from those that inspired Gandhiji and Sardar when they founded the Ahmedabad Trade Union which later blossomed forth into Hindustan Mazdoor Sangh and subsequently acquired at the All-India level the nomenclature of Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC).

We left for Indore by plane and at the Indore airport we were received by the Maharajas of Gwalior and Indore, the *Rajpramukh* and *Uprajpramukh* of the Madhya Bharat Union respectively, apart from leaders of the INTUC namely Khandubhai Desai, Gulzari Lal Nanda, and local leaders headed by N. Dravid. As soon as we arrived, however, I learnt about a tragic-comic incident that had preceded us. Those days because one or two persons wanted in connection with Gandhiji's murder were absconding, one of whom was Surya Dev, and on other general grounds, security checks had been intensified. The security arrangements for Sardar were looked after by G. K. Handoo of the Indian Police who was at that time a Deputy Director in the Intelligence Bureau. It appears that in the discharge of his duties he had subjected the entire Gwalior staff to security check and even the food prepared for Sardar had to be tasted. The Maharaja of Gwalior considered this a reflection on himself as he thought that Sardar's safety during the period he stayed with him, was his responsibility and in any case neither he nor his servants could be expected to poison Sardar.

But worse was to follow. One of Birla's men told me that Handoo had arrested D. P. Mandelia, Ghanshyam Das Birla's trusted lieutenant who managed his Mills at Gwalior and Nagda, and sent him to jail. I immediately contacted Handoo who told me that they had received information that Surya Dev was being sheltered in the Gwalior Mill, that he harboured evil designs against Sardar and that Mandelia was protecting him. I laughed the piece of news in the face and told him that Mandelia was one who would protect Sardar rather than Surya Dev and that I was apprehensive about Handoo's own fate if what took place came to Sardar's notice. I therefore told him that the best course would be for him to have Mandelia released forthwith so that the problem would cease to exist by the time Sardar reached the Residency, where he was staying with the *Rajpramukh* and came to know of it. I undertook the responsibility for Mandelia's bonafides and told him that I would try my best to prevent the news reaching Sardar before Mandelia's release. Even if I failed I would be able to deal with the situation. On this assurance Handoo had Mandelia released and within about half an hour as instructed by me Mandelia was at the Residency. I pacified Mandelia who was looking miserable rather than angry and told him and others, who could have been expected to carry the news to Sardar, not to breathe a word of it to him. It was only in the evening when Sardar was relaxed and we three, Sardar, Maniben and I were by ourselves that I jokingly related the whole incident. Sardar, after a few remarks on the oddities of the Intelligence system laughed it away and made some jokes later when Mandelia met him. It was thus that an incident with unpleasant possibilities passed over.

In his speech at the Inauguration of the INTUC, Sardar traced its history to the earlier pioneering days in which the lead was taken by Ansuiya Ben, sister of Ambalal Sarabhai a prominent millionaire of Ahmedabad along with Shankarlal Banker and himself and a few others to found the Trade

Union in 1920 with Gandhiji's blessings. This was three years before any official Trade Union had been founded. He spoke of the smooth working of the Union in Ahmedabad on the principle of referring unresolved disputes to arbitration and of the part played by Gulzari Lal Nanda and Khandubhai Desai in strengthening the organisation. He then alluded to the foundation of the Hindustan Mazdoor Sangh and the part played in it by himself, Rajendra Prasad, Shankar Rao Deo and Jairamdas Daulatram. It was with the Ahmedabad organisation serving as the core that the All-India Organisation was set up with such dedicated workers as John of Jamshedpur, Abdul Bari of Bihar, Devan Sen of Calcutta and Ramanujam of the south. In contrast to the strike policy of the rival body he cited that only one strike in three months had been launched by the INTUC during the Quit India Movement when there was full justification for it considering it was a struggle against British Imperialism. At that time the rival body had remained ineffective. 'But now', said Sardar, 'when the strike is undesirable they shout for strikes.' He concluded by saying :

> Now the Government is in Congress hands. The foreign rulers have gone. The Indian Princes too have handed over power to their people. Why should the workers now fight the mill-owners ? They don't depend on them now for justice. Power is in our hands. The police is ours ; so is the army. What is there to get from the mill-owners by striking ?
>
> Fortunately, there is not so much poverty among you as among our rural brethren. Your employment gives you some sort of a fixed income, but they suffer from under-employment, fitful employment for the three or four busy months in the agricultural season. We have to think of those under-fed millions also. Not that you should give them something from your pocket. I am against the alms mentality. Rather we should produce more. Our long period of slavery and the years of the recent war have drained the life-blood of our economy. Now that we have taken over power, the onus is on us to rejuvenate it ; new blood has to be poured in drop by drop. There is no other way.
>
> It would be foolish to think that as soon as the British left, we could just divide among ourselves what is left. They took away what they could, but we have to enrich this impoverished country again by further production. Whoever labours shall rule...
>
> Some people want the Government to run everything, leaving out the capitalists. But the Government of India today has not the resources to run all industry itself. If we try, we will not be able to run it for twelve months and we will suffer losses. We have to act with discretion.

It was with a sense of achievement and peace of mind that Sardar prepared himself for the annual exodus to Dehra Dun to avoid the heat and dust of the Delhi summer. A year had elapsed since the heart attack of March 1948, and his health had improved. He began to devote himself to the day's routine with vigour and energy. Although he missed his brisk morning

walks which were substituted by early morning drives in which I invariably accompanied him and some special invitees used to join, he was ready for the day's work as usual and followed the same chart as before except that we persuaded him to prolong his period of sleep and rest after lunch and to cut down his physical exertion as much as possible.

But at Dehra Dun he began to take some liberties with himself particularly in the mornings and evenings when he used to take a brisk round or two of the garden scanning every fruit tree and flower bush in the compund. Our most frequent visitors used to be Tyagi, even now a 'man-mark' in Dehra Dun, Bikram Sondhi at that time a prominent 'Young Turk' of the Constituent Assembly and now leading his life in comparative obscurity and Khurshid Lal a confidante of Rafi Ahmad Kidwai and his Deputy Minister, a man of refined tastes and culture.

An A.I.C.C. meeting was held in Dehra Dun during the period of our stay, during which Sardar met a number of members from all over the country but particularly from U. P. He also had frequent visits from the U. P. Chief Minister Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, C. B. Gupta the Civil Supplies Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri and other Ministers who invariably accompanied these three. From Delhi the regular visitors were the Prime Minister, Rajendra Prasad who was the President of the Constituent Assembly, V. P. Menon and H. V. R. Iengar, and a number of Chief Ministers from the Provinces and the Unions of States who utilised their visits to Delhi to make a trip to nearby Dehra Dun. Individual Ministers also used to arrive from Delhi now and then.

We were therefore kept quite busy in the course of both informal and protocol duties. Fortunately, the Circuit House had a sufficient number of rooms and was well-furnished. Sardar always kept a good kitchen under the efficient management of his vigilant and energetic daughter Maniben and we had a sufficient staff at our disposal. We were also fortunate in having excellent Deputy Commissioners or Superintendents of the Doon as they were called. B. D. Sanwal, A. D. Pandit, later Chief Commissioner of Delhi and B. B. Lal, later Chief Secretary of U. P. were the more outstanding and helpful of them. They made our task easy and where we needed the assistance of higher levels, B.N. Jha and Bhagwan Sahay who were Chief Secretaries during this period and who were very good friends of mine, were always available. Above all Govind Ballabh Pant himself was vigilant and attentive as regards our needs and comforts. Altogether, notwithstanding the strenuous time we had, our stay was most pleasant and rewarding.

My family and virtually the entire Birla family at one time or another used to be at Mussoorie. Often I used to drive up to Mussoorie in the evening and return to Dehra Dun the next morning, the distance between me and Sardar during this period of absence being covered by frequent telephonic discussions. Ghanshyamdas Birla also used to come down from Mussoorie frequently in the mornings and return in the afternoons. Other members of the Birla family used to visit us either during their journey up to or down from Mussoorie on their way to Delhi or sometimes accompany Ghanshyam Das

Birla for the day. These visits to and from Mussoorie used to provide a welcome and refreshing change from the daily routine and this, together with the visitors from Delhi, made us forget that we were removed by 150 miles from the capital. Besides, the telephonic conversations and the *dak* messengers from Delhi used to keep us in daily touch with the affairs of the country and the goings-on in the capital.

I might say here a word about our relations with the Birla family. The Birla family had played a notable part in building up the country industrially and in financing the national freedom movement. Their purse-strings were always open to meet the frequent demands from almost every province and from national leaders. From the Punjab to Madras and from Assam to Bombay almost every leader of note sought their assistance and received it. Ghanshyam Das Birla himself had something of an underground past in the early days; he was a suspect sympathiser of the terrorist movement. Sardar first met him at Nagpur during the Flag Satyagraha; he was sponsored by Manilal Kothari. His eldest brother Jugal Kishore Birla was not only of a religious bent of mind and a philanthropist of great distinction but also a liberal Hindu with reformist zeal and missionary devotion, self-sacrificing and of flawless character. R. D. Birla with his headquarters in Bombay and B. M. Birla with his headquarters in Calcutta were kingpins in their respective areas and resourceful aides to Ghanshyamdas Birla at the centre in Delhi. Gandhiji, Sardar, C. Rajagopalachari and Govind Ballabh Pant were acknowledged and close friends of the family but of them, Sardar was definitely the closest though Gandhiji undoubtedly commanded their devotion with almost religious fervour. They had a big empire of their own in commerce and industry but they were also pioneers in the field of academic, scientific and technical education and their munificence and charity had become proverbial. It is true that certain propagandist described them as capitalists and attributed to them all the real or imaginary sins that are associated with that class. As a matter of fact they were entitled to much more, having rendered invaluable services, individually and collectively to the country, taken risks while assisting the freedom movement, setting an example to others, in terms of enterprise and pioneering efforts and creating goodwill and friendship abroad. They took pride in trying to make the country industrially and economically strong. They were and undoubtedly are affected by the profit-motive and desire for gain but which industrial or commercial undertaking, personal, institutional, cooperative, or corporate is not. Even nationalised banks in their non-profitable ventures have to be bolstered up by a credit guarantee corporation. The accretion to individual wealth under the modern system of taxation is a fraction of the accretion of capital and resources to the undertaking as a whole and the private beneficiaries (shareholders) in every case run into hundreds and thousands.

The closeness which Sardar felt towards them must be assessed in the context of all these features and not in the wrong context of the new-fangled idea of the untouchability of the capitalists as a class. Sardar was in his own day sometimes criticised for his friendship with the Birlas. He was

never swayed, as Gandhiji never was, by this criticism for the simple reason that they both judged individuals as a whole, as it should be, and not in parts. Pandit Nehru once told Sri Prakash who recounted it to me that Sardar was a great man, one of the greatest the country has ever had, but he did not like his friendship with the Birlas. Time was to tell, however, later for the Birlas were no less in demand in the Nehru family in subsequent years. Once when Sardar was going to Nasik to attend the Congress Session, Rajagopalachari asked him where he was going to stay. Sardar quickly retorted, 'I don't change friends, I will stay with Birlas.' What is more, Sardar seldom intervened to the benefit of Birla ventures and in the interests of the Birla family. Government under Pandit Nehru's Prime Ministership did much more and rightly so, to encourage and support Birla enterprises than was ever done when Sardar was a member of Government. It is not because Sardar was afraid of doing so; in fact his closeness to the Birla family lasted up to his death; much longer than that of some other leaders who bowed to sectional and vocal clamour. Sardar used to counsel them and he was quite confident that their enterprises and exertions would secure commendation or approval on merits. Sardar's sense of gratitude and his friendship were of the genuine variety. His sense of gratitude was not confined to individual kindness and consideration received, but manifested itself even with the public. I cannot think of any other family which has rendered such yeoman service to the country in politics, in commerce, in banking, in industry, in education, in fine arts, in cultural activities, in sports and in diverse other fields of national activities. In recognition of these, Sardar once wrote to the late Raja Baldev Das Birla, the father of the Birla brothers, (see Appendix). Ghanshyamdas Birla even when he opposed the Congress along with Madan Mohan Malaviya in 1926 continued to be a close friend of Sardar and Gandhiji so much so that he even tried to be a bridge between the Congress and Government during the Viceroyalties of Lord Willingdon and Lord Linlithgow. He was implicitly trusted by both Sardar and Gandhiji and unlike some other of his class never betrayed that trust.

I can also say from personal knowledge that the Birlas never tried to exploit their friendship with or closeness to Gandhiji or Sardar. If they got attention because of their nearness to authority they do not stand alone in that role of honour; they share that distinction with myriads all over the country who secured similar attention on similar grounds. And the capitalists are not the only beneficiaries of that popular psychology; the scanning finger will run down to different categories of men and women who matter with persons in authority, big or small and whom they or their associates or subordinates are apt to regard, as a normal human reaction, with some distinction. In fact, I can cite instances in which Sardar acted quite independently of their representation in matters concerning them, or contrary to their advice in economic matters in which he undoubtedly consulted them as he did others, like Ambalal Sarabhai or Kasturbhai Lalbhai or Krishnaraj Thackersey. Leading businessmen and industrialists also proferred their advice to him, such as Sir Purshotamdas Thakurdas, J.R.D. Tata, Homi Mody

who was appointed Governor of U. P. at his suggestion, Navinchandra Mafatlal, Badridas Goenka, Walchand Hirachand or M.L. Dahanukar, all belonging to different industries or different commercial fields. By talking to them he obtained different facets of industrial and commercial opinion on which, along with the official briefing, he used to form his own opinion.

Sardar's approach to capitalists and capitalism was undoubtedly friendly but this should not surprise anyone. After all capital is one of the factors of production; it is much more important during the build-up of a country's economy than in a developed economy. It was an article of faith with Sardar that in order to make up the leeway of a century of backwardness and under-development and to enable it to take its place in the world community and also attain prosperity, a united endeavour on the part of the country as a whole and not merely a sectional class effort or a public sector was what would promise quick and worthwhile results. Class hatred or class consciousness were, in his view, pastimes in which the country could indulge at leisure when it could sit back somewhat after attaining the requisite amount of economic advancement. He was conscious of the vast gaps in the agricultural and industrial fields, in the sphere of education and in the build-up of national character which had to be filled if the country was to achieve the strength and greatness which had been denied it by history over the centuries. As a practical man with a patriotic vision and a clear idea of the human and material resources at the disposal of the country, he knew what to expect reasonably of their capabilities or potentialities and also recognised what maximum efforts and results could be secured. It was in this context that he pleaded passionately for industrial truce during the period of build-up, for the deferment of experiments which divided rather than united the people, for the acceptance of the principle of arbitration in industrial disputes, for eschewing strikes and for a realistic assessment of our resources and effort-output and on that basis to organise ourselves and plan for our progress. As regards capital, he believed in mobilising it for the national effort but in a manner that would make it grow and at the same time be available for investment in productive and purposeful ventures.

To bring home his ideas he would mention two illustrations : one referred to the effort on the part of a child to run; he could undertake it only after he had first acquired the habit of crawling and then standing and finally running; disaster was inevitable if any indispensable link in the chain was missed. Similarly he would say that if all the wealth of capitalists were acquired it would come to three or four rupees per head of the population--too small to make any impression on the country's poverty. On the other hand, if it could multiply through careful investment in productive effort, through individual or collective enterprise as in industrial or commercial undertakings, it would probably benefit the people in multiples. He firmly held to the belief that the time for distribution of wealth came after the wealth had been created and not while it was being created. Consequently, idealistic concepts of 'isms' in economic matters could wait until (and not before) sufficient wealth had been created. He had no misgivings on

the score that a better distribution of wealth could be secured when the time came to settle down after the country had been unified. Strong and single-minded efforts were needed to attain that position. He went even further and said that in determining the kind and size of effort that was required he had no abhorrence of any ideology, principle or practice so long as it fulfilled the criterion of the country's interests.

I have thought this place fit for this expatiation of the working of Sardar's mind towards capitalists and capitalism and the economic effort needed by the country as it was during this period, when the tasks of unity and peace had been successfully accomplished and economic issues had come or were coming to the fore that he had the opportunity to systematically form and state his views and to weigh the contemporaneous trends and potentialities for the future. He was a patriot in a hurry and on the march who was mentally at work on the country's problems, and a practical idealist who was counselling an eager and expectant people on the wisdom of 'united we progress and divided we go back' advice which as the future showed was the only sane course to adopt. Nothing has slowed down more the pace of progress of the country in subsequent years than wishful thinking, deterrent doses of cloud-based idealism, vast experiments of radical economic philosophies, unrealistic assessment of the country's resources and capabilities, wrong determination of priorities, and a medley of confusion caused by contradictory trends of thought and wasteful and unproductive efforts. If we have tragically failed to realise our plans, it has been 'the tragedy of high intentions self-defeated.'

III

During his stay in Dehra Dun, apart from the discussions with the Prime Minister and other distinguished visitors and frequent discussions which Sardar held with Tyagi, Sondhi and Khurshid Lal—all of which took place in the usual good spirits further enlivened by Sardar's sense of humour—there was hardly any important development which held public attention. The public had got used to the integration of one State after another; in fact it took such events so much for granted that they ceased to be sensational. But long-distance telephone calls and visits enabled Sardar to keep an eye over the administration of the whole country and give instructions to deal with passing situations and difficulties to the Chief Ministers and Premiers of Unions of States and Provinces. These were passed on either personally during their visits or on the telephone. These personal discussions during the entire period of Sardar's regime at the Centre saved tons of correspondence and removed all possibilities of misunderstandings and the need for clarifications associated with correspondence; what is more they saved time which at this stage of Sardar's life was vital to achievement.

One problem for instance was successfully solved through these means and that was the taxing and exacting problem of the R.S.S. There is no doubt that despite continued imprisonment of its Guru Golwalkar and thousands

of its members, no dent had been made into their organisation or into the conviction and beliefs which held it together. Sardar's efforts lay in bringing them into a state of mind in which they would be able to take the whole organisation out of the slur of being a fascist or para-military party and would confine themselves to non-political reformist or organisational work. He did admire the discipline and dedication which they had shown and felt that it was impossible to keep them indefinitely under detention. During one of Pandit Nehru's visits to Dehra Dun he had discussed the issues thoroughly Although he did not conceal his complete abhorrence of the R.S.S. organisation, its beliefs, its policies and its techniques, Pandit Nehru appreciated the position expounded by Sardar and acquiesced in his efforts to bring them round.

Sardar did not wish to lend prestige to the organisation or its leader by calling the leader and his associates for talks as the British had done sometimes when they felt that the Congress leaders had been in detention too long. He, therefore, decided to utilise the services of the resourceful Home Minister of the Central Provinces, Pandit D. P Mishra for this purpose and along with him the Governor Mangaldas Pakvasa and the Premier Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla. Skilfully and adroitly they managed the situation through an intermediary and brought Guru Golwalkar round to fall in line with what Sardar wanted. Eventually, as I have said earlier, an agreement was reached, the leader along with his followers was released and the ban was withdrawn on 12 July 1949. The agreement was further cemented during the interview which Guru Golwalkar had with him at Delhi after Sardar's return to the Capital.

From my own personal point of view, the Dehra Dun stay was quite rewarding. It was a stimulating experience looking after visitors of the eminence of the Prime Minister, Rajendra Prasad and Govind Ballabh Pant. Apart from getting an insight into their personal relationship with Sardar it enabled me to assess their own personal habits and ideas on men and matters. Sardar was an object of reverence for all of them. Sometimes they discussed the personal affairs of certain leading personalities with refreshing candour. Occasionally, gossip was not taboo. Never was anger introduced in the discussion. Rajendra Prasad and Govind Ballabh Pant were particularly deferential to Sardar- the former had the attitude of a younger brother and the latter of a disciple. Pandit Nehru was always respectful and attentive to Sardar, so was Sardar to him. Never did I hear a jarring note. Even when they differed---and when they did they both introduced into the discussion vehemence without offence -they tried to reason why, and very often Pandit Nehru deferred to Sardar's point of view particularly in his judgement of men. Even in organisational matters Pandit Nehru generally accepted Sardar's approach and assessment barring where Rafi Ahmed Kidwai came in, or U.P. affairs were involved. Sardar was also content to let Pandit Nehru deal with U.P. affairs but where Govind Ballabh Pant or Purshottam Das Tandon were involved he had his own say which generally prevailed.

Sometimes the distinguished visitors stayed overnight with us. I remember once having breakfast with Pandit Nehru. I did not realise that he was also fond of corn flakes as I was. We both began to have it. I filled my plate with a generous helping of corn flakes and milk. Panditji took a reasonable quantity of flakes and with little milk. He then began to look for a banana. I asked him what he was going to do with it. He then looked at my plate and said that I should be instructed into how to enjoy eating corn-flakes and advised me to take whatever portion of corn-flakes I liked with less milk and put in thinly cut slices of bananas. I tried it then and there and enjoyed it thoroughly.

Similarly once we were having lunch at which Rajendra Prasad was present. Dehra Dun is famous for its mangoes and lichis. I thought Rajendra Prasad, being an asthmatic patient, would not take mangoes ; so I had a stock of lichis on the table. As we were settling down to our meal he enquired if there were any mangoes. Sardar then turned to me and with a sorry face I had to say there were none as I thought Rajendra Prasad would not take them. Sardar pleasantly taunted me with taking it for granted. I jocularly retorted that he could not take me for granted either and rushed in a car to the market and brought a sizeable quantity of Dasheri mangoes and some other varieties. We helped ourselves generously to them after the main meal was over but I was astonished to see the pile of mango-skins on Rajendra Prasad's plate. Detecting that look of astonishment, he turned to me and said 'This is nothing. A connoisseur mango-eater like me must have stones piled up so that they come up to my chin. It is easier with those who have a beard for they have to keep the pile below the beard level.' He then recited the story of a Muslim leader in Bihar who had a beard and was fond of mangoes and generally managed to besmear it with mango-juice. Despite that, he would not reduce the quantity if the mangoes were good.

The relations between Rajen Babu and Sardar were one of the best. I do not know of any single occasion when he spoke loudly in Sardar's presence and he always had the same reverence for him as though he was his elder brother. In Bihar matters Sardar on his part was equally deferential to him. Bihar even then was rent with factions. Shri Krishna Sinha and Anugrah Narain Sinha were rivals. Mahesh Prasad Sinha (known as Mahesh Babu) and Krishna Ballabh Sahay were Shri Krishna Sinha's lieutenants ; both played an unenviable role in local politics. Mahamaya Prasad was, as far as I recollect, the President of the Bihar P. C. C. These divisions and disputes gave rise to allegations and counter-allegations. At the time two scandals were the talk of Bihar and Delhi. One related to the Sathi or Bettiah lands and the other to the grant of permit for molasses. After several fruitless discussions in the Working Committee, Sardar was asked to look into the cases and make his recommendations. There was a huge mass of papers and several files which were handed over to me by Sardar for preliminary study. I also had to hold discussions with some of the officials concerned while Sardar confined himself to the main officers.

One of them was N. Baksi, a fearless and honest officer of the I. C. S. cadre who was instructed to see Sardar only after Sardar had administered a severe reproof to the Bihar Ministers. In order to appreciate the tortuousness of Bihar politics of those days I take liberty to quote Baksi's own account of his visit to Delhi :

> In a resolution passed by the Congress Working Committee, probably in 1949, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who was then the Home Minister, had been requested to make an enquiry regarding a number of allegations against the Bihar Ministry including what came to be known as the 'Molasses Scandal' and the 'Bettiah Loot', connected with the settlement of lands and the use of the funds of the Bettiah Estate. While persons, including a number of officials, were sent by the Bihar Government to Sardar Patel for examination, I was prevented from going, for months, in spite of Sardar Patel's direction to send me, apparently because it was feared that inconvenient truths might come out, until, under the pressure of the Congress Working Committee, the Bihar Ministry agreed to send me to Delhi. Strangely enough, instead of informing me that I should go to Delhi for seeing Sardar Patel in connection with the enquiry, a mysterious telegram, apparently processed under inspiration, regardless of truth, came from Government to me at Ranchi, asking me immediately to proceed to Delhi for advising the Bihar Ministry about certain proposed amendments of the Constitution. I was greatly intrigued by this kind of telegram, which was presumably meant to be a smoke screen, so that I might not take the relevant papers about the enquiry with me and might be taken unawares when questioned by Sardar Patel. Little did the Ministry concerned and their advisers know that leading people, including Members of Parliament, in close touch with Sardar Patel, had kept me fully posted about the resolution of the Congress Working Committee and the manner in which the Bihar Ministry had been trying to prevent Sardar Patel from examining me. I took time, ostensibly to examine the legality of the proposed amendments, in consultation with the Advocate-General and others, my real intention being to collect all the necessary papers about Bettiah, etc., and to study them with care before going to Delhi. Immediately after arriving at Delhi by air, I went to see Sri Anugraha Narain Sinha, the Finance Minister, father of Sri Satyendra Narain Sinha, the present Education Minister of Bihar, who had always sustained me with his affection, support and advice, and enquired why with all the eminent State lawyers like the Attorney-General available at Delhi, a Revenue Officer like myself, claiming no knowledge of Constitutional law, had been called for advice about amendments of the Constitution. He just smiled and asked me to see the Revenue Minister, who was staying at the Constitution House. When I met the Revenue Minister, he abruptly asked me to see Sri Satyanarain Sinha, then the Congress Party Whip and now the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, and vanished ! A few minutes later, Sri Satyanarain

Sinha came out and greeted me with a smile, saying that the Sardar had been anxiously waiting for myself, and took me to the telephone and put me in touch with the Private Secretary of Sardar Patel, who said that the Sardar was ill and was waiting to see me before going to Bombay. On my enquiry as to the date and time of the interview, he said to my surprise, that I might come any time that suited me. Apart from the fact that I was somewhat tired after the journey, the peculiar and unexplained behaviour of all concerned made me feel that it would perhaps be wise to take a little time for keeping my eyes and ears open for gathering some relevant information before I went to see the Sardar. I, therefore, suggested that subject to the Sardar's convenience, I would come on the following day. The Private Secretary immediately agreed, even without any reference to the Sardar. Next morning, I met Sardar Patel who was lying ill on a stretched easy chair forming a bed, with his daughter Miss Patel, sitting by him. There was another gentleman, whom I had not met before, but was presumably an officer directed to be present. It was a memorable and long interview, lasting for more than half an hour, during which various questions about the large amounts of money alleged to have been made out of the 'Molasses Scandal', the settlement of some Bettiah Farms with Sri Ram Narain Sahi, who had been reported to the Sardar to be closely associated with the then Chief Minister and had been the Commissioner of Excise, Bihar, the attempted use of the surplus funds of Bettiah and other matters, were put to me. The fatherly manner in which I was received and talked to and what he said bore ample testimony to the confidence Sardar Patel had in the Services.

After going through the files, hearing the officers concerned and obtaining the explanations of the Ministers, Sardar came to the conclusion that the Bettiah lands were given to the Sahis in an irregular manner (the allegation was that they were given virtually as a wedding gift to the daughter of Mahesh Prasad Sinha whom Sri Krishna Sinha had adopted) and consequently they should be taken back on payment of the amount paid by the Sahis. Also there was an irregular exercise of patronage by the Revenue Minister in the grant of permits for the sale of molasses which was alleged to have been used for profiteering by the grantees, many of whom were local politicians or their relations. After Sardar had come to these findings, it fell to me to draft the report which after Sardar's approval was shown by me to Rajendra Prasad under Sardar's instructions. Rajen Babu had been under considerable strain over the case as it concerned his Bihar associates; at the same time he realised that the irregularities could not be condoned. When he read the report he told Sardar that it was like a High Court Judge's judgement and he could not take exception to any single statement or finding in it. The report was then sent to the Working Committee which accepted the findings and ordered remedial action to be taken. Eventually, so far as Bettiah lands were concerned the Courts ruled

out the legislation passed by the Bihar Government to take over the lands on payment of the original price. I must record that despite the fact that the report reflected on both Sri Krishna Sinha and his colleagues, he acknowledged both the fair and judicial approach underlying the report and its findings.

To my mind, one of the greatest educational benefits I had secured because of my nearness to Sardar was the insight that I got into the strength and weaknesses of the various politicians who came to see Sardar or whose conduct and behaviour I had occasion to watch or read about or assess during those days. Sardar set a high standard of rectitude for himself and for others and seldom relaxed it. The Nariman episode and the incidents of Sharif, the erring Minister of C.P. and Dr. Khare, had already shown that he was not the one to tolerate serious irregularities or indiscipline in the conduct of Ministers or partymen. He had the same attitude to his own son Dahyabhai whom he had occasion once or twice to take severely to task for something which he did and of which he seriously disapproved. I cannot recall any single instance in which the errors of ways on the part of his men were brought to notice and he did not express his disapproval in an unmistakable manner or where it was required, take action. Even V. P. Menon and I did not escape his wrath when we were found seriously at fault. It is difficult for me to pick out and mention names; I can only relate incidents. But at this point I would only like to say that even the high personages in the party used to be diffident about approaching Sardar when they had something to say to which they thought he would react angrily. Even Rajendra Prasad showed the same hesitation with the result that he would send a message through his confidante Chakradhar to me to be passed on to Sardar. Govind Ballabh Pant also did that twice or thrice and on an important matter of difference of opinion even Morarji Desai utilised my mediation. I thus became a convenient shock absorber in addition to discharging my normal duties; at the same time both Maniben and I were vigilant enough to ensure that Sardar was not dragged into public controversy on this account.

About this time U. P. politics was becoming a hot-bed of controversy due to Rafi Ahmed Kidwai's antipathy to both Govind Ballabh Pant and Purshotam Das Tandon. One thing was typical of Rafi Saheb and that was his habit of making allegations with an air of conviction and certainty which were invariably found to lack substance. I have already referred to his allegations against the U. P. Chief Justice. He now selected Govind Ballabh Pant's Private Secretary, C. D. Pande for attack. On enquiries being made they were found to be baseless. But Govind Ballabh Pant took it to heart and rang up Sardar expressing his wish to be relieved of his position. I was despatched post-haste by Sardar to Lucknow to prevent him from doing so with the words more or less 'Tell him not to behave like a woman; in politics we have to have a tough hide to repel such attacks without injuring ourselves.' After an hour of discussion during which Pant broke down once when he referred to having to face such false imputations after so many years

of blameless political life, particularly since his accuser had the ear of Pandit Nehru, I succeeded in steadying him When Govind Ballabh Pant next visited Sardar after a week, he received a further dose of tonic advice from Sardar himself and the crisis was over. Similarly, Rafi made an allegation about Justice Agarwala which also on enquiry was found to be without any substance.

In the meantime, some local elements made allegations against Rafi—one about compromising a case on receipt of some amount for political funds. Considerable feelings were aroused on that score in the Party and the agitation assumed a serious aspect. Instead of the normal machinery being employed for that purpose, Pandit Nehru took upon himself, with Purshotam Das Tandon who was then the President of the U. P. C. C., the task of looking into the allegations. After enquiry, the allegations were found to have substance but the transgression was condoned as it did not result in personal gain. Another instance of a similar nature arose in connection with the collection of subscriptions for a memorial building in Delhi; it was more serious in view of an accusation that it involved support of a particular policy. But this was not even enquired into. Similarly once an allegation was made about the conduct of a U. P. Minister. In that case, a very confidential enquiry was made by the Intelligence Bureau and the result was communicated to Govind Ballabh Pant. Pant was aghast as the Minister concerned was a highly trusted colleague. On further enquiry again the allegation was found to lack any basis. However, these allegations and counter-allegations poisoned the political atmosphere in U. P. and the situation gradually deteriorated until it assumed a schismatic form by January 1950, to which I will revert later.

Towards the end of Sardar's stay in Dehra Dun, he received a set back in his health. He had been overstraining himself for some time which affected the functioning of his circulatory system to which his old trouble of an intestinal loop added further strain. The result was that his breathing became heavy, his pulse-rate began to go up and he developed some odema on his feet and swelling below the eyes. Dr. Gilder and Dr. Nathubhai had to be called and their treatment gave some relief but he returned to Delhi a sick man. By that time, the process of constitution-making had made considerable advance. The forum of discussions had shifted from the Committees to the Constituent Assembly and before the latter discussed matters, the proposals had to be piloted through the Congress Party. That subjected Sardar to further strain and towards the end of July he was confined to bed. Eventually, his doctors advised him to shift to Bombay for treatment and rest and we all left for Bombay; while there we stayed at Birla House.

In the meantime, one particular issue had assumed a serious controversial aspect and that was the property clause in the Fundamental Rights. The Article had been incorporated in the draft after very detailed discussion and was generally on the lines of the provision in the Government of India Act, 1935 except that the adjective 'just' was omitted before the word compensation. Govind Ballabh Pant who was rightly keen on protecting legislation

relating to Zamindari Abolition from legal challenge had put up some opposition in the Committee but later had acquiesced in the draft. Thereafter, there had been considerable re-thinking and during Sardar's absence both at Dehra Dun during his illness in Delhi, some changes were sought to be introduced which would have seriously affected the position and adversely affected the prospects of securing large investments, both internal and external, that were required for our development. This would have caused very adverse reactions in the country in general. Sardar felt that the price was too much to pay for the limited object of saving Zamindari legislation from legal challenge. He, therefore, wrote a rather angry letter to Pant who later came to see him in an attitude of submission. Sardar asked him to think of some other method of protecting the legislation he had in mind without affecting the general position. He also sent a message to his colleagues of the Congress Party of the Constituent Assembly which he asked the Chief Whip, Shri Satyanarain Sinha to get cyclostyled and distribute to the members. The message was very strongly worded and also dealt forcefully with the general insinuation that he was out to protect vested interests. The message was so forceful that Pandit Nehru on reading it asked Satyanarain Sinha to withdraw it from circulation saying that they must find a way out. Eventually, a solution was found in leaving the article more or less as it was drafted by the Advisory Committee and in protecting from legal challenge land reforms legislation passed eighteen months before the date of the Constitution coming into force. Later, this was found inadequate and a list of protected laws was added to the Article and a general exception was given to land reforms legislation from the provision of compensation.

In Bombay, due to the comparative immunity from daily stresses and strains of Delhi, Sardar began to have a quick recovery from the set back in his health. Pandit Nehru paid one or two visits to consult Sardar but on important matters the process of consultation through correspondence or telephonic discussion continued. There were matters, however, which Panditji found unable to carry through the Party. One of these was the question of national language on which Tandon led the Opposition and fanatically pleaded the case of Hindi. He mustered substantial support for his side particularly among the U. P., Bihar, and C. P. members. He was stoutly resisted by the members from the south who insisted on the recognition of English. Matters came to such a pass that a split in the Congress Party was threatened. Pandit Nehru had his sympathies with the south; Sardar also recognised the limitations of Hindi in its current state of development and felt that even on the basis of merit English had to continue in use for some time. Satyanarain Sinha and K. N. Munshi rang up Sardar pleading with him to intervene. Sardar agreed and sent instructions and a message on the subject in which he made a plea to the Party to deal with the issue in a practical manner and in a spirit of mutual understanding and goodwill. He suggested that both Hindi and English should be recognised as national languages and that the matter should be reviewed

after a lapse of a few years. This approach was eventually accepted though Tandon was unrelenting; those maintaining his stand, however, were reduced to a small minority. There was, thus, such a complete change in the situation that it came as a most welcome surprise to both the Party and its leadership in Delhi. After the controversy had been settled, Sardar sent a letter of appreciation which was read at the meeting. Because of its intrinsic excellence, I take liberty to give the following extract :

> It has distressed me beyond words to find that we should so forget the cementing force of our Party loyalty and the mutual love and affection which bind us as members of the same organisation as not to have been able to resolve much earlier our differences on this vital issue. After all, it is not ordinary but such big issues which are the test of our commonsense, of our faith, of our mutual respect and regard and of our capacity to behave with a spirit of mutual understanding and accommodation. Let us hope, however, that we shall profit from the experience of this controversy and learn to treat big issues with a breadth of outlook and vision which must characterise members of such a big political organisation. It is only then that we can face our tremendous responsibilities in a big way otherwise little minds and great responsibilities go ill together.

Another issue of major importance which disturbed the normal placidity of relation at the top level came up in a peculiar manner. The question of who should be the first President of the Indian Republic had been agitating Pandit Nehru for some time. He was very keen on Rajaji being the first President. It was strange how Pandit Nehru took to Rajaji after his appointment as Governor-General despite his earlier antipathy to him in view of his role during the Quit India Movement. The antipathy was so strong that Sardar had at one time to restrain Pandit Nehru when Rajaji was speaking at the A.I.C.C. meeting; in other words the very sight of him used at one time to rouse his ire. The transformation was attributed by Sardar to two factors — one was Mountbatten's recommendation which was mainly responsible for Pandit Nehru agreeing to appoint him as Governor-General and the other was the support Rajaji extended to Panditji in the event of differences of opinion with Sardar. An outstanding example of such support was the decision about Police Action in Hyderabad in which case Sardar described the dissent of Rajaji and Pandit Nehru as 'the wailing of two widows as to how their departed husband (meaning Gandhiji) would have reacted to the decision involving such a departure from non-violence.'

It is curious. however, that Pandit Nehru never mentioned the matter to Sardar before he left for Bombay or when he met him at Bombay. Sardar was therefore surprised to receive a letter from Rajendra Prasad that Pandit Nehru had seen him and told him that Sardar and he had decided that Rajaji would be the first President and that he, Rajendra Prasad should not, therefore, seek that office. Rajendra Prasad felt distressed that Sardar had not mentioned it to him at all and said that if he had said so even once he

would have willingly obeyed the orders of Sardar whom he greatly respected. Now it was going to be very awkward as so many members had come and spoken to him about their support. Even then he would withdraw if that was his wish. On receiving the letter Sardar was very angry; he first rang up Rajendra Prasad and told him that he had not been a party to any such decision and was in fact not aware of it before he left Delhi. Nor did Pandit Nehru mention it to him when he came to Bombay. He said that he need not desist from the course that he had adopted and when he returned to Delhi they would settle the issue amicably in a mutual discussion. He thereupon wrote to Pandit Nehru objecting to his involving his name without having a discussion and saying that he could not subscribe to his choice without returning to Delhi and assessing Party opinion which seemed to him to be in Rajen Babu's favour However, the controversy, involving as it did, two distinguished colleagues and Party leaders should be settled in a dignified manner. Pandit Nehru wrote back accepting the fact that he had not mentioned it to Sardar, adding that somehow he had the impression that he had mentioned it to Sardar; he also agreed to defer the matter until after Sardar's return to Delhi.

During Pandit Nehru's visit to Bombay and subsequently, Sardar mentioned to him the need for the introduction in the Constitution, Articles providing for guarantees to the civil servants whom India had taken over from the Secretary of State for India and for the Services in general and also some provisions to cover the Covenants and Agreements with the Rules as part of our settlement with them at the time of integration. Pandit Nehru demurred to the former. When Sardar pointed out that the relevant guarantee formed part of the Indian Independence Act and that he had agreed at one time with Mountbatten that such a guarantee would be incorporated in the Treaty with the British which was then contemplated as a party of the Cabinet Mission Plan, Pandit Nehru agreed to place the matter before the Party. As regards the latter, he first doubted the need for constitutional provisions since the Covenants and Agreements were already there; Sardar told him that without the Constitutional guarantee which had been promised to the Rulers, the latter would not feel assured. Pandit Nehru thereupon agreed to incorporate the guarantees in the Constitution. On his return to Delhi and after sounding party opinion he rang up Sardar and told him that he was finding some difficulty in pushing these matters through. Sardar got somewhat annoyed and told him 'what are we, leaders or followers? If we are leaders we must lead and not follow' but finally asked him to keep them pending until his return.

During his stay in Bombay the problem of control over textiles came up for consideration owing to a crisis in the textile trade. Shyama Prasad Mookherjee who was the Minister for Industries rushed to Bombay to request Sardar to intervene. He and his Secretary Venkataraman had a discussion with Sardar, who advised them that a meeting of the leading textile industrialists might be called but he would not be able to participate in it. Dr. Mookherjee then suggested that he might depute me to represent him so that some

solution could be evolved. If necessary he would call some industrialist to meet him at Birla House later. The meeting was held at which allegations and counter-allegations were made about the manner in which controls were being administered or evaded as the case may be and matters seemed to be heading, towards a deadlock. I was quite unfamiliar with the problem but educating myself all the while and grasping the essentials I scribbled a formula for partial decontrol and passed it on to Sir Vithal Chandavarkar, a very intelligent, able and straightforward mill-owner who gave his provisional assent but asked me to consult Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Krishnaraj Thackersey and Neville Wadia, all of whom thought that the scheme might work. The threatened deadlock was thus averted and first steps were taken to decontrol cloth. The arrangement was to be reviewed from time to time so that if it failed to achieve its purpose it could be scrapped. Fortunately, not only did it work but it also led to other steps towards decontrol and thereby solved a very difficult problem involving an essential commodity in the life of the community.

By about the middle of September 1949 Sardar had made adequate progress in convalescence to justify the medical advisers permitting his return to Delhi in the last week. A date was fixed but on that day Bombay had torrential rain and cyclonic weather uprooting many trees dislocating both rail and air traffic. We had therefore to postpone our departure by a couple of days and actually left on 26 September 1949. Our stay in Bombay had been restful and uneventful. The children of Birla House and their relations in Bombay, particularly R. D. Birla's grandson Ashoka and grand-daughter Asha and Sardar's grandson were such joyful and playful companions both for Sardar and myself. We used to swim regularly in a small swimming pool in Birla House and I would get 16 mm comic films to entertain us. Sardar particularly shared my fancy for Laurel and Hardy films. The two inimitable comedians enabled us to enjoy hours of mirth every day. We were therefore sorry to leave Birla House but glad to go to Delhi. So many epoch-making events awaited us particularly in view of the final stages of Constitution-making and the impending departure of Panditji for the U.S.A., an event to which both countries were looking forward in the hope that a new chapter would be opened in the relationship between them.

When Sardar returned to Delhi, he had no difficulty in resuming the threads of various issues and matters which needed his attention since he had been kept fully in touch with developments in Delhi and in fact all over the country. By the time he came, the Constitution was in its final stages of preparations; only matters relating to the Civil Services, Indian States of Jammu and Kashmir, the Emergency Provisions and the first President of the Union had been held for his return. Panditji's impending visit to the U.S.A. and Canada which was to involve an absence of nearly six weeks also raised various issues for discussion. The country was at peace at home and abroad; with Pakistan the tension had been reduced after the cease-fire agreement was signed on 1 January 1949.

Events leading up to that agreement require to be told. The discussions in

the Security Council on our complaint of aggression against Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir had taken a very unfavourable turn. Zafrullah Khan had succeeded with the support of the British and American members in diverting the attention from that complaint to the problem of dispute between India and Pakistan over the question of Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan's aggression in the State was pushed into the background due to his aggressive tactics in the Council as against the somewhat meek and defensive posture we adopt to counter him. The result was that a mixed Commission was appointed to go into the dispute and make recommendations, no doubt trying in the process to bring the two parties together or at least nearer each other. Apart from the members which the Council itself appointed, one each was to be nominated by India and Pakistan. Instead of contesting and resisting the Council's idea, we submitted to it and after a discussion between Sardar and Panditji it was decided to nominate Mr. Korbel from Czechoslovakia. It was not, however, after considerable heart-searching that this was settled. I remember Sardar and Pandit Nehru sitting down to discuss this matter. After taking different countries in turn and eliminating them for one reason or another they found that there was none on which they could depend implicitly. Sardar turned to Panditji and jokingly remarked, 'I thought we had a foreign policy?' It was then that they thought of a country, the representative of which could be managed and the choice fell on Mr. Korbel.

The Commission came to visit India and Pakistan in the summer of 1948 and after alternately visiting the two countries and holding discussions with the two Governments issued a Resolution on 13 August 1948. Sardar could not participate in these discussions or in the deliberations leading to them due to his illness and stay in Dehra Dun. Pandit Nehru, Gopalaswami and Girja Shankar Bajpai, Secretary-General of the Ministry of External Affairs represented India in these discussions. The Resolution dealt with the cease-fire agreement and laid down principles of a Truce Agreement which involved :

(a) the withdrawal of its troops by Pakistan from the occupied area;
(b) the withdrawal of Pakistan's nationals from the same area;
(c) the administration of evacuated territories by local authorities under the surveillance of the Commission;
(d) on the Commission's notification of the withdrawal of the Pakistani nationals and tribesmen and intimation of the fact that Pakistani troops *are withdrawing*, Government of India was to begin to withdraw the bulk of their forces in stages to be agreed upon;
(e) in the interim period, i. e., pending the acceptance of conditions for a final settlement, the Government of India was to maintain minimum of forces considered necessary in agreement with the Commission to maintain law and order;
(f) an affirmation by both India and Pakistan that the future status of Jammu and Kashmir would be determined in accordance with the

> will of the people and *upon the acceptance of the truce* agreement both Governments were to enter into consultation with the Commission to determine fair and equitable conditions whereby such free expression would be assured.

Although the acceptance of the Resolution involved virtual equation of India and Pakistan in the final settlement of the question and of bracketing India and Pakistan in the later stages of evacuation, notwithstanding the acceptance by the U.N. of the sovereignty of Jammu and Kashmir Government over the entire State, the Government of India accepted the Resolution. It was at this stage that Sardar participated in decision-making though at earlier stages he used to be kept in touch through Pandit Nehru's visits, letters or telephonic communication. Sardar however stipulated that no further discussions should be held on the question of plebiscite until after Pakistan had accepted the Resolution. Pakistan, however, refused to accept the Resolution and the matter should have stopped there. But the Commission succeeded in persuading Pandit Nehru and Girja Shankar Bajpai to hold the discussions on plebiscite after a visit to Pakistan, despite Sardar's antipathy to that course.

The result was to my mind unfavourable to India. The Resolution of 5 January 1949 which resulted from these discussions and which was accepted by both India and Pakistan was based on separate discussions with the representatives of the two countries in which the Commission gave different and sometimes contradictory assurances and understandings to the two Governments. What is worse, instead of the initiative being with us as was the case since Pakistan had not accepted the 13 August Resolution, it passed on to the Commission. The result was that again Pakistan secured a finger in the Jammu and Kashmir pie and we got embroiled in interminable discussions with the Security Council on the question of the implementation of the Resolution. In the process we almost reached a point of disaster which was avoided again thanks to Sardar's intervention, the story of which I shall tell later.

Thus, the question of plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir took on a more concrete form by the UNCIP Resolution of 5 January 1949 which spelt out conditions under which it was to be held and the steps that would have to be taken to prepare for it—an altogether onerous responsibility. The latter situation made the Sheikh even bolder in his demands and on one side he began to press for the Maharaja's abdication and for his son's (now Dr. Karan Singh) regency ignoring the fact that the U.N.'s acceptance of the sovereignty of Jammu and Kashmir Government over the entire State was the direct result of Accession signed by the Maharaja in whom the sovereignty vested; on the other side he began to lay down his own terms for constitutional relationship with the Indian Union.

All this kept Sardar virtually fully pre-occupied from the moment he set foot in Delhi. However, the capital and the whole country hailed his recovery with joy and relief and all-round expectation was roused that the

important issues, including a somewhat deteriorating economic situation, would be solved expeditiously and effectively in accordance with the tradition of speed and finality set by Sardar. During his absence, divisions and cracks had appeared both in the organisation and the Congress Party of the Constituent Assembly which boded ill for the organisation and the country. The air of expectancy thus had to be catered for with expedition, skill and determination. Immediately after his arrival, therefore, Sardar began his discussions with Panditji, his other colleagues, and the leading lights of the organisation and the party to ascertain the trend of views on various matters. All this had to be done before Panditji left on his foreign tour for it was clear that Sardar would have to take decisions on many vital issues during his absence abroad.

Sixteen

Hyderabad : Police Action and After

THE SITUATION in Hyderabad was progressing towards a climax. Under Sardar's constant pressure and despite the opposition of Pandit Nehru and Rajaji, the decision was taken to march into Hyderabad and thereby put an end both to the suspended animation in which the State stood and the atrocities on the local population which had become a matter of daily occurrence. Sir Roy Bucher and his advisers, but *not* Major-General Chaudhury who was leading the campaign had calculated on a prolonged resistance. Sardar had challenged this assessment and said that it would not take more than a week. Sardar was eventually proved wrong only by two days and regretted his over-estimate. The fact was that the Hyderabad resistance collapsed sooner than expected; the bubble of El Edroos' military master-mindedness was pricked; the stories of the prowess of the Hyderabad forces were found grossly exaggerated: in fact they proved no better than what they had shown themselves worth in history during the days of the Company, Hyder Ali and the Marathas.

When the Nizam found the noose tightening round Hyderabad on 16 September (four days after the start of the Action), he summoned K. M. Munshi whom he released from confinement to his own house and on whose advice the Nizam ordered an end to all resistance, announced his intention to form a new Government and invited the Indian troops to go to Secunderabad and Bolarum Cantonments. Munshi had to be politely told that the direction of affairs would henceforward be in the hands of Major-General Chaudhury and that he was not to commit the Government of India to the Nizam in any respect. Thereafter Munshi returned to Bombay—a sick, shaken, disappointed and much-misunderstood man. Among the persons rounded up was Kasim Razvi himself who was reported to have been discovered under humiliating conditions in his brother-in-law's house. When Gen. Chaudhury reported the discovery, somewhat proudly, to Sardar on the telephone, Sardar told him that by capturing him alive had only raised a great difficulty for himself as he would have to find alternative ways and means for his disposal. The news of the success of the Police Action in Hyderabad gladdened Sardar beyond measure. The country welcomed the news with unconcealed joy and Sardar's prestige rose sky-high. Even Pandit Nehru decided to partake of the general mood of triumph and announced his intention to go to Hyderabad forthwith as if the victory was his. The real intention was, I presume, to make sure

that the new regime behaved itself and the Nizam and the Muslims of the State were not humiliated.

Sardar was in no hurry to proceed triumphantly to Hyderabad. He decided to bide his time not only to introduce himself to the Hyderabad populace but also to settle the problems of its future and of the Nizam himself. He preferred to see the State settle down to a period of peace and reconstruction after the troubled and disturbing time of the past fifteen months since Independence, before he went there. Consequently it was not until February 1949 that he did so.

Meanwhile, the situation in Hyderabad was settling down. However, the Hyderabad lobby was still active in the Prime Minister's house and the Ministry of States on that account was quite frequently in his mind. The constant refrain was the position of the Muslims of Hyderabad in some matter or the other. Sometimes it appears that there was more sympathy with the 'dethroned' Muslims than there was for the victims of *Razakars* and communal violence. This was in spite of the fact that under the watchful eye of the Military Governor who could never have been accused of communalism, the balance was being held to the extent it could be in the atmosphere of suspicion engendered by the pro-*Razakar* and pro-Pakistan past. The efforts of the Ministry of States throughout were to support the official regime in the difficult task of pacification and gradual assimilation of laws, finance and administration in line with the neighbouring Provinces. For this purpose the team of administrative personnel selected was a mixed one, representing all those Provinces. The Military aides to Gen. Chaudhury were also carefully chosen.

Sardar's general direction and control were throughout exercised in favour of liberalism, administrative efficiency, assimilation of the system and pattern along neighbouring provincial lines without affecting the good features of the existing pattern and keeping, as far as possible, forces of retribution and revenge either out of or under control. It is from this point of view that he kept the State Congress out of the governing set-up, though he was under constant pressure to include them. The State Congress at the time was led by Swami Ramanand Tirtha whose part in popularising it and in building up the resistance movement was recognised by Sardar but whose limitations in undertaking a pivotal role were fully appreciated by him. Accordingly he ruled him out and was inclined to take counsel more from Ramkrishna Rao and D. G. Bindu who were later to be Chief Minister and Home Minister respectively. It was not that he wanted to keep popular elements out; what he wanted was to place the administration of the State on a sound footing and then to take the risk of a popular Ministry in it.

The position of the Nizam gave Sardar considerable cause for anxiety. In fact it is strange but true that the Prime Minister sometimes intervened in favour of the Nizam and the ruling family. The two Turkish princesses through their intermediaries were particularly apprehensive of their position though surprisingly the Nizam was quite sympathetic to their demands. Their two sons were a problem both to them and their own father. Lotus-

eating under sheltered conditions had bred in them their own peculiar notions on how to spend their enforced leisure; they had collected round themselves a coterie of friends, few of whom could be called worthy of the company of princes of such nobility. The relations between them and their consorts and between them and the father were far from happy. One of them even pressed his claim to be recognised in place of his father. In many ways the whole atmosphere in the ruling family, in the nobility and the rich upper classes, both Muslim and Hindu, was that of a feudal aristocracy preserved under an out-of-date Court hierarchical system of rank and privilege. One heard so many tales of intrigue, of the Nizam's greed and acquisitiveness, his haughtiness towards the nobles and the family, his large harem, his idiosyncracies and his miserliness. He was undoubtedly a man of culture in some respects and an Urdu and Persian poet. One of his teachers was Jalil, a renowned poet from a neighbouring town of my own district. The Nizam's poetical compositions had some merit in them; though his Urdu poems were generally Persianised and he himself had a preference for Persian, he did occasionally lapse into Persianised Urdu. Gen. Chaudhury dealt with the Nizam and his family and the nobility in a manner which won their confidence. In this he was greatly helped by the gentleness and sympathetic nature of his accomplished wife, who, I have no doubt, succeeded remarkably well in applying the soothing balm to injured feelings.

It is not necessary for me to give the details of the measures undertaken and policies adopted in dealing with the multifarious problems and issues raised or the great effort that was required to bring Hyderabad to normalcy and to introduce in the State the corpus of the system and the healthy principles of administration which prevailed in the neighbouring. provinces. The administrative personnel, barring some undesirable elements remained intact; the higher echelons were reinforced by selected personnel from outside. But what gave me special joy was that the language of the administration was retained as Urdu and the great advance the State had made in the promotion of Urdu was not interfered with. Although there might be a disposition to attribute this to my closeness to Sardar, I would like to clarify that Sardar did not need any persuasion from me. He instinctively saw the merit of the policy which had been pursued in the past.

However, this curiously enough boomeranged on me. The Administration was on the look-out for a Chief Justice from India who could follow and conduct proceedings in Urdu. The choice without my knowledge fell on my father-in-law, Justice Ganga Nath. The selection was entirely an appropriate one. Justice Ganga Nath had a distinguished career, both as a Judge of the Allahabad High Court and after retirement as Chief Justice in Jammu and Kashmir. After settling the matter during a discussion between Gen. Chaudhury and Sardar, Menon approached me to secure my father-in-law's consent. I immediately exploded — somewhat unusual with me — and told Menon that this would be regarded as a slur on Sardar who would be accused of accommodating my relation at my instance. I told him that I had scrupulously avoided getting Sardar into any embarrassment on my

account and for that reason had given up smoking and drinking and attending social parties, so that no one could gossip about me. What he was doing would not only undo this but would land me into public notoriety. Menon argued with me that the recommendation was his and Chaudhury's and he was prepared to take full responsibility for it. I was adamant and spoke to Sardar to dissuade him from taking that step. Sardar listened to me without a word and then said that so long as he was alive and was prepared to deal with it publicly I had nothing to fear. He told me that Menon had gone into the list of Judges available and found that no one else was suitable from every point of view including freedom from prejudice, and what had weighed with them in particular was his record in Jammu and Kashmir. I asked him why he could not get one locally. He told me to talk it over with Menon. I did, but was told that for the time being they did not find local talent suitable in the circumstances the State was under. I then insisted that the term of appointment should be restricted and he agreed to limit it to six months. He was actually there for only four months.

By this time a great deal had been accomplished in Hyderabad. As atmosphere of confidence had been created; the administration had been organised; steps were well on the way for the abolition of *jagirdari*. *Razakars* had been disbanded; and violent activities had been curbed. But the worst legacy of the old regime was the communist menace in Nalgonda and Warrangal where a reign of terror had been established and a parallel Government virtually attempted. The whole population was being held to ransom. Warrangal and Nalgonda were not isolated attempts of the Communists to let loose their violence and seize local pockets in order to establish themselves. Similar activities were afoot in Sunderbans and some areas near Calcutta and in Bombay. Sardar took personal interest in directing action against the Communists. The Communist Party was declared an unlawful organisation and its violent activities were curbed by the use of force on a wide scale and in an intensive manner. In Hyderabad the task was entrusted to V. Nanjappa of the Indian Civil Service who was in the Territorial Army as well and he carried out his task with thoroughness and efficiency at considerable personal risk. He had earlier distinguished himself in Kolhapur as the Administrator of the State. I remember Sardar telling Vellodi later that Nanjappa's personal safety should be a matter of special concern and if anything happened to him, he would have to bear the blame. The operations lasted for about a year at the end of which the reign of terror had ceased and normal life had been restored. The cleaning operation was so thorough that it was reported to me very reliably that a leading member of the Communist Party had expressed the view that the Communists would not be able to revive any violent activity for at least twenty years. As stated earlier, in February 1949 Sardar decided to visit Hyderabad. Although the situation had returned to normal Gen. Chaudhury and his aides still feared that some incident might take place and mar the success of the visit. But Sardar was indifferent to the danger. He was confident that he would be able to meet the situation. We included Mysore also in the itinerary. At Mysore he

had talks with the Maharaja and the Chief Minister, both of whom as well as the local Congress agreed to enlarge the sphere of accession The matter was formalised the following June. One of the highlights of our stay in Mysore was the visit to the spectacular Brindaban Gardens with its coloured fountains and lush green lawns. From Mysore we proceeded to Hyderabad. Sardar was all excitement. During the plane journey, he reviewed the prolonged negotiations and formula-hunting by Mountbatten, his forced acquiescence in most of what took place earlier and the compulsion of his parting gist to Mountbatten capped by the decision to take action. He briefly surveyed what had been accomplished since the Police Action and was on the whole satisfied with the manner in which peace and order were being gradually restored. He did worry about the position of the Nizam. At one time he had decided that the Nizam should go but then realised the danger of creating a precedent for the dethronement of a Ruler and the unsettling effect it might have on the other Rulers. He had now reconciled himself to his continuance.

As we drew near the airport, I could see a glow of triumph on his face. Only a year before, about this time, they were exploring schemes of compromise on terms much less than accession and virtual semi-independence. From that we had moved to something more substantial but even then were far from parity with the other Unions of States. What had led him to accept the succession of formulae was Mountbatten's success in persuading Panditji to agree to them. There was no doubt that he had acquiesced to them against his better judgement; privately he had resented Mountbatten's various moves but with both Panditji and V.P. Menon falling in line and the prospects of action rendered remote because of Panditji's opposition, he had allowed matters to take their own course. The activities of the *Razakars* had stiffened his attitude and made him link the interim solution with a long-term one but even then he had not fully succeeded. Providence was however kind to him and to India. The action came and solved the entire problem at one stroke; he was now free to treat Hyderabad on par with other States. The strength and determination he showed in the closing stages of this episode had yielded results. The whole country had endorsed his stand. It was thus a moment of fulfilment and not a routine visit.

The plane landed and seeing the Nizam he commented 'So, His Fxhausted Highness is there !' I told him that this was indeed true because of his reported addiction to opium. Later I was told that the Nizam had taken a double dose to sustain himself. As we landed Sardar got down and proceeded towards, and was greeted by the Nizam. Seeing him I was filled with compassion. A frail figure in an old *achken*, oil-stained cap and white Indian trousers with broad borders tucked up above the shoes and carelessly worn socks, greeted Sardar with trembling folded hands. Sardar did not show any coldness, and greeted him with a smile. General Chaudhury then took him to meet his top officers and members of the nobility including the Prince of Berar Azam Jah, Nawab Zain Yar Jang who was a confidante of the Nizam and a very shrewd and able man, and Nawab Ali Yavar Jang then Vice-Chancellor of Osmania University, a remarkable man gifted with

ability, intelligence, urbanity of manner, and holding enlightened views and possessing wide experience and knowledge, altogether the man for the crisis in which the State found itself. I came to know later from General Chaudhury that he had been most helpful to him in keeping the educated young men and University students under control.

The two important institutions which were the main preoccupations of Sardar in Hyderabad were the State Congress and the Nizam. The State Congress was naturally keen to occupy offices of power and authority. In that expectation many had flocked to its fold. A number of them had returned to the State after months of exile and entertained the feeling of a triumphal return but it was without the real fruits of such a triumph. Munshi had been their main support but after more than a year of stay in very difficult conditions, including house-arrest during Police Action and strenuous hard work of a high order, he had come under displeasure for his last act of broadcasting on the radio with the Nizam after Police Action. Ill-health came to his rescue and he made a dignified exit from the State. Though Sardar appreciated his excellent work on the whole, he was under a cloud so far as Pandit Nehru was concerned. Despite this, Sardar was able to rehabilitate him when the Cabinet was reconstituted in May 1950 and before this he went as Governor of U.P. to succeed Sir Homi Mody.

As regards the Nizam, Sardar was meticulous in observing the protocol to which he was used during the British regime. He called on the Nizam at King Kothi accompanied by me and General Chaudhury. We were received at the portico by the Nizam himself and after the greetings were over we were conducted to a room in which the centrepiece was an ebony structure representing a fountain. On two sides there were semi-circular benches on which we sat, Sardar and the Nizam on one side and General Chaudhury and I on the other. An uneasy but brief period of silence was broken by Sardar by enquiring of the Nizam about the state of his health and the latter returning the compliment of a formal enquiry. When these courtesies were over Sardar took the lead by telling the Nizam that past events had cast a shadow all over the country and that his own part in these events had come in for very adverse criticism; that despite our efforts to reach a settlement even at the cost of principles by which we had stood, his obduracy and ambition to be an independent monarch had stood in the way. He also mentioned that the *Razakars* had been allowed gradually to emerge as a rival power to the administration and that the administration headed by the Nizam had not only failed to deal with them but had actually supported and encouraged them. Upto this point we thought that Sardar was building up a case for demoralising him but immediately his line changed and he said that bygones could be bygones and past conduct could be ignored if there was genuine repentance and remorse and he hoped that the Nizam would own himself to that feeling now that the Indian Government had made it clear that both in relation to him and in relation to the State it stood not for revenge and retribution, but for healing the wounds and reconstructing the fabric of administration and the structure of relationship between Hyderabad and the Dominion.

The Nizam far from catching the hint began to indulge in protestations of his innocence and claimed that he had held the scales even between the different classes of his subjects. He went on to plead that he was a prisoner in his own house and had acted in duress and that he was helpless against his executive council and the pressure of *Razakars*. Against the latter argument, Sardar queried why he had not listened to the advice of the Nawab of Chhatari, Sir Sultan Ahmed and Sir Walter Monckton and why he had put faith in arch-communalists like Moin Nawaz Jang and Laik Ali. As regards holding the scales even, he reminded him of the disabilities to which the Hindus in the State had been subjected and the political subjection in which they had been kept. He added, much to my surprise, that some of his own writings had been of a grossly communal nature. The Nizam mildly contested the latter view and again referred to his helplessness in dealing with the *Razakars*. Sardar then referred to flirtations with Pakistan and his transferring the securities to it and the approaches sanctioned by him both to some foreign powers and to the U. N. The Nizam pleaded that he was compelled to take all these actions under the advice of his Council and in circumstances in which his own life and future were in danger. He then reiterated his non-communal outlook towards his Hindu subjects. As the talks progressed the Nizam became increasingly nervous presumably fearing that the final decree and judgement were about to be passed.

Sardar was watching out of the corner of his eye the reactions to the points he had made and seemed to hope for some sign of remorse. Suddenly he turned to him and asked him whether he had ever written some verse which was derogatory to the Hindus. He denied it. He then turned to me and asked me to recite the lines I had mentioned to him some time ago, which were a part of the Nizam's composition. I was taken aback and looking at the Nizam's misery I tried to avoid a direct onslaught. But Sardar insisted and I told him that the following lines formed part of a *ghazal* which had appeared in the issue of a local daily, as far as I remembered, in February 1939, during the Arya Samaj agitation :

band naqoos hua sun ke nidayè takbir
zalzala aa hi gaya halqae zunnar pè tha

(The conch was silenced at the sound of the *Kalema* and the sacred thread was also shattered).

This silenced the Nizam who pleaded forgiveness and told the Sardar that he was genuinely sorry for what had happened and wished it had not; he gave a solemn pledge that he would be loyal to the new regime and consigned his position and prestige to the safe keeping of the Government of India. Throughout, the discussion was in Urdu on the side of Nizam and his own type of Hindustani on the side of Sardar. After these assurances of loyalty and co-operation Sardar relaxed and immediately responded to the Nizam's appeal by saying that so long as he stood by his word he had nothing to fear

either from the Government of India or the people, and that he could look forward to the Government treating him with the courtesy and consideration due to his position and with sympathy in the circumstances he found himself in. After this the Nizam recovered himself and adopted an attitude of complete humility and expressed his profuse thanks for the magnanimity shown by Sardar. Later in the day the Nizam returned the call He was much more at ease and was more forthcoming. He complimented Sardar on his achievements in the field of integration and also praised the Military Governor's regime for the quick transformation from Police Action to settled administration. During a brief interlude when Sardar had gone away for a while the Nizam turned to me and asked how I could speak Urdu so fluently and idiomatically I told him that it was my mother-tongue. He was taken aback and asked me how I could develop it in far-off Madras. I then corrected him about my native place telling him that I came from Pratapgarh a small town thirty seven miles from Allahabad, the erstwhile hometown of the Nehru family. He had a hearty laugh over my description and said: 'So you come from the motherland of Urdu.' I told him that Urdu in the course of its history took shelter under the care of several mothers and pointed out how Hyderabad itself nursed it after its birth and had lately under his regime done so much to promote it. He was visibly pleased at this recognition from what he must have thought an unexpected quarter. The conversation was in high-flown Urdu, his with a typical Hyderabad accent. It was altogether a very lively conversation which he recalled when we met at Hyderabad House two years later during his last and only visit to Delhi under the new regime in independent India.

The highlights of this visit were Sardar's discussions with the State Congress leaders, his receiving of a number of deputations, the Convocation function of Osmania University, his great speech at Fateh Maidan and last but not the least, his review with Gen. Chaudhury and his principal aides, of the administrative and other problems of the State. His discussions with the State Congress were directed towards two objectives—one was to contain their restiveness at being out of office and the other concerned the resolution of differences among themselves. He succeeded in achieving both these objectives though minor fissures were to appear now and then. The deputations were many, each with its own point of view and harbouring grievances; Sardar dealt with them sympathetically and was particular in administering the healing touch to some Muslim deputationists.

But the height of his achievements was the Convocation address at Osmania University where he received a Doctorate. As we went to the function and proceeded to the decorated shamiana, I could see uncertainty, sullenness and apprehension on the faces of the audience, teachers and students alike. I was wondering whether the much talked of Aligarh atmosphere would prevail. However the Vice-Chancellor, Nawab Ali Yavar Jang's *bon hommie* and air of confidence were an inspiration. But no one was prepared for what followed. As Sardar stood to speak he received the customary cheers but gradually as he proceeded to unfold his ideas in his usual Hindustani

enriched by the use of some Persian words current in literary Gujarati the audience began to come to life. The speech was short but eloquent and to bring home some of the effect created I give below the full text:

> I must first thank you for the great honour conferred on me. I have been feeling rather diffident about accepting this University degree. My education has been in the university of life. I have learnt somthing from experience. But whether I am deserving of a degree from such an august institution which has assimilated and synthesized so much of ancient Indian cultures, I do not know. If we had all synthesized our various cultures in our own hearts, as this University has done, the shape of things in India could have been different. To those who have been educated here and who are receiving their degree today, I would respectfully submit that a great duty devolves upon them. They have publicly pledged themselves today to try to make themselves deserving of their degrees and continue to do so all their lives. If so many young people truly make such an efforts, I am confident India's future will be bright.
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> Let us drop the curtain on the past. Our future is now in our own hands. God alone knows how we will shape it. But the forty million of His creatures who call themselves Mussalmans and the 300 million others who are also His creatures have to live together. India's future—and let me say the future of Pakistan too—is to be shaped by the people who were born out of this earth, will live on this earth and will merge into this earth again. As Gandhiji taught us, we must imbibe all that is best in all religions. All religions are good. We have only to filter out the many evils which we have introduced into religions, knowingly or unknowingly. In all humility, we should seek out our role and our duty in this land of birth and education. We should seek God's grace to rid us of mistakes such as we have committed in the past. We will deserve our degrees if we learn to live as brothers and true citizens of India, doing deeds which redound to India's credit.
>
> The Vice-Chancellor has said some nice things about me. I only know that I wish to remain a loyal soldier of India. May God end my life if I deviate a step from this loyalty. A man's life can be evaluated only after he is dead, for few men have reached a stage where they can be sure they will commit no mistakes till the end of their days. Whatever we manage to achieve in our lives is not much to boast about. Man is an instrument in the hands of divinity. For an awakened man it becomes his duty to pray and work in such a way as to avoid errors. Therefore, see that you do nothing which is a blot on the country's good name. Let every act of yours redound to India's credit. Let the world see that India's youth have changed with Independence and are inheritors of India's ancient culture. The malaise that has seeped into the universities today, leading to retrogressive, barren, internecine strife, is a denial of our ancient culture and will do us no good. I and you have received our degrees today. Let us endeavour to deserve them. God bless you all.

The loud and prolonged applause, spontaneous and unmistakable in its sincerity, which greeted the end of the speech was all climax to the frigidity with which we started the function. It was clear that Sardar's personality and his nationalistic approach had won the day.

His speech at Fateh Maidan the next day was set in a broader pattern. It dealt with the past and the present. The pavilion of Fateh Maiden provided an artistic setting; overlooking the sea of humanity on the Maidan below, the balcony with its artistic furnishings and comfortable furniture looked more like the observation deck of a ship from which all the vantage points could be seen. Sardar in his speech covered a large ground. He dealt with the past which was to be forgotten and the present to be utilised. He referred to the position of the State in the All-India set-up and stressed the need of consolidation of the change before any administrative experiments could be made. He delivered a set of instructions to Congressmen for their behaviour in the circumstances. He then made a fervent plea for communal unity and administered a warning to the communalists and Communists:

> I appeal to you to maintain complete communal unity, to forget the past and turn to the path of progress. As long as Hyderabad does not progress, India too cannot progress. Hyderabad is now part of India and if there is a tumour in the heart of India, India cannot be heatlhy. Removal of the foreign rule did not mean removal of the internal tumour.
>
> For bringing about progress there should be complete unity among Hindus, Muslims, Christians and the Depressed Classes. Each of you should consider one another as brothers. Those who wish to stay in India should treat one another as brothers and if they could not do this they can leave Hyderabad as soon as possible.
>
> The Communists are from outside and are trying to fish in troubled waters. Most of the Communists caught are outsiders. I can say to them that they will be free to go elsewhere but if they do not, I shall not allow one Communist to remain alive, because it will poison not only the State but the whole of India.
>
> The Communists are holding up the progress of the State in certain parts where even electoral work is being hampered. I appeal to all Congressmen to unite and help the administration in such a way that a healthy atmosphere can be created in which there will be no place for Communists.

It was a triumphal end to a busy tour and Sardar's satisfaction at the successful conclussion of the visit was expressed in the following message sent to General Chaudhury the next day:

> Please accept for yourself and convey to the people of Hyderabad and members of your Administration, civil and military, my gratitude for the warm and affectionate welcome they extended to me.
>
> Hyderabad has been constantly in my thoughts and I had been looking forward to a personal acquaintance with the people and the Administration.

> I was very happy to find that the people were settling down to the change from the recent past with commendable display of a spirit of accommodation and that the Administration, under the wish and skilled guidance of yourself and your colleagues, was meeting effectively the many demands which the changing order and changed situation were making on it, and was tackling with orderliness and prudence the many difficulties with which it is faced.
>
> I should in particular like to thank the police and armed forces for the excellent traffic and security arrangements made in connection with my visit. I am also happy that my visit was utilised by the State Congress to evolve a settlement of their outstanding differences which I hope will endure.
>
> I pray that the people of Hyderabad will maintain the progress they have made and will in course of time decide upon their future consistent with their needs, suited to their genius, and in accord with the lessons of history and facts of geography.

There was a sequel to this visit. The Administration had to make elaborate security arrangements for the visit. The Hyderabad lobby in the Prime Minister's house made a point of it and the large expenses involved. The Prime Minister was not slow to act on it and wrote to Sardar. Sardar replied that this was the concern of the Hyderabad Administration, he had nothing to do with it and that Pandit Nehru's visit to Hyderabad had cost more. This was indicative of nothing more than Pandit Nehru's emotional reaction to an alleged piece of extravagance without taking note of the practical consideration; once these considerations were projected he would realise the futility of his initial emotional outburst.

Seventeen

The Last Phase of Constitution-making

MOST OF Sardar's time was taken up with Constitution-making. It is indicative of the speed and success of his policy of integration that the draft of the portion relating to Indian States, which was so far based on their separate existence and separate constitutions and a scheme of federation with the rest of India, had become out of date. With the developments that had taken place so far, Sardar now set out to settle with V. P. Menon and other leading lights of the States Ministry, the outline of the new relationship. This outline had then to be sold to the Rulers and the representatives of the States concerned and to the Drafting Committee all this within the fortnight that remained. The thorny and controversial hurdle of the Presidentship of the Republic had also to be cleared. The emergency provisions relating to financial breakdown had to be settled. The safeguards to the Services were also in the pending list. The question of Kashmir—a running sore then as now—was also to be settled before Pandit Nehru left India on 6 October. Whatever consultations had to be done with him had to be finished within a week.

I doubt if, barring the days of activity soon after 3 June 1947, there ever was a more busy period in Sardar's life since he joined the Centre in September 1946. Every hour of the day upto his bedtime was filled with work. The only relief he got was during meals or an hour or so after. Even mealtime was often filled by the transaction of ordinary business getting his orders on departmental papers or instructions on important correspondence or settling his engagements. My task of fitting in so many demands within the time available was particularly difficult. Pleas and sometimes even anger had to be smilingly faced; compassion for the applicant had often to yield to the concern for the health of the central figure—the cynosure of all eyes—his health had only recently been restored to normalcy. However, as Shakespeare said, 'Time and the hour runs through the roughest day', so it was; each day that passed departed with a sense of relief and each new day was welcomed with dutiful apprehension.

I have always regarded it as unfortunate that of all the questions that engaged their attention during this busy period, Pandit Nehru gave prominence and priority to the question of First Presidentship of the Republic. Sardar had sensed party opinion and found that the feeling was overwhelmingly in favour of Rajendra Prasad. I do not think that I would be giving away a personal secret if I say that Sardar shared the popular choice.

It was not because he rated Rajen Babu higher than Rajaji but because he felt that considering his record as a Congressman and his position as President of the Constituent Assembly, he fully deserved that honour. As regards Rajaji, despite his closeness to him (when the famous battle of no-changers was fought in the twenties and in the test of loyalty to Gandhiji in jail even stalwarts like Deshbandhu and Motilal Nehru were found wanting, they stood shoulder to shoulder like comrades weathering the storm) Sardar could not overlook the eclipse that covered him during the Quit India days and the hostility that prevailed towards him particularly after the Congress leaders were released in 1945 and at various meetings of the Working Committee and A.I.C.C. held subsequently, until time had applied some healing balm. It was largely due to Sardar and Gandhiji that he was virtually rehabilitated and to such an extent as to be acceptable as a Congress Member of the Interim Government. In the brief nine months until the decision for Partition was taken he had not gained much prominence in the tackling of crisis situations which the Congress faced *vis-a-vis* the League and he could be spared for the Governorship of West Bengal. It might be true to say that in that Governorship he was 'rusting unburnished' and not 'shining in use'. But he had established himself well enough in the eyes of both Lord Mountbatten and Pandit Nehru to qualify for the succession to the former in the office of Governor-Generalship. So far as Sardar was concerned, Rajaji commanded no special attention on a personal plane he always commanded his affection and respect. Although a strong partyman at all times and a devoted follower of Gandhiji in his Quit India philosophy, Sardar did not allow the divergence of those days to influence either his attitude or his personal assessment of Rajaji's qualities of head and heart. None, unless affected by deep prejudice, could deny him those sterling qualities which marked him out or could ignore his outstanding services to the Congress and the country. There was also no doubt that barring certain matter in which they differed fundamentally, both Rajaji and Sardar agreed on certain issues as a matter of conviction rather than as a concession to each other. There was thus a great deal of mental or intellectual proximity apart from the nearness that comradeship in a prolonged patriotic enterprise brings about. It is easy therefore to see that on this issue Sardar felt himself precariously on the horns of a dilemma and knowing how strongly Pandit Nehru felt he leant on 'time', that invaluable asset on such occasions. But so far as Pandit Nehru was concerned, the sands of time were running out; he was impatient to settle the issue before he left for the U.S.A. and regretably Rajaji seemed equally impatient—at least such was the impression Sardar had formed.

In the discussion which Sardar had with Pandit Nehru within two or three days of his return from Bombay, Sardar counselled postponement until after his return from the U.S.A. and Pandit Nehru seemed to agree but on the day previous to his departure he changed his mind. During the previous discussions there was a frank appraisal of the two personalities on their merits and Sardar was somewhat surprised at the newly cultivated liking

Pandit Nehru had acquired for Rajaji as against his pronounced allergy of the earlier days. There was a reference to the manner in which Rajaji had imparted a quiet dignity to the Governor-General's house and he had acquitted himself creditably in his dealings with foreign dignitaries and visitors despite his preference for indigenous ways and environments. Pandit Nehru also referred to the good advice he had always received from Rajaji and the secular outlook he had inspired. He did not conceal his view that some of these virtues he would not be able to expect of his rival. Sardar did not counter any of these views. He was not in a position to make a choice between two lifelong colleagues who were both dear friends and comrades. During the last two years and more he had come much closer to Rajendra Prasad. Rajen Babu, through the Constituent Assembly, had built up personal contacts as well as a personal reputation among the members which is such a valuable asset in Parliamentary life. Those days, as always, what mattered more was the field contacts in the political and parliamentary institutions than the far more restricted contacts in the sheltered drawing rooms and private studies of the Government House whether in Delhi or in the Provincial capitals. In public life what is most important is the public personality projected, the public image and the capacity to deal with public demands and need; not so much the private personality, or influences confined to the four walls of a few houses. Basically, therefore, Rajen Babu had a pronounced advantage over Rajaji so far as the members of the Constituent Assembly were concerned. As regards Pandit Nehru it seemed to me, and the thought persists with me even now, that his own use for Rajaji perhaps clouded a judgement which was otherwise always so sensitive to the workings of the popular mind. In fact, next to Gandhiji and perhaps sometimes even superior to him, Pandit Nehru was often an unerring barometer of public reactions, both actual and anticipated.

However, it was not so much the failure on his part to assess the opinion of members of the Constituent Assembly as the adulation of some of his close associates, which made him discard Sardar's advice and launch on the precipitate course of facing the Congress members of the Constituent Assembly on this issue. On the afternoon of that fateful day for Rajaji, those associates whom I would prefer not to name but who are not unknown by those who were active those days, persuaded Pandit Nehru to ring up Sardar and tell him that if he, Panditji, sponsored a resolution to the effect that the present Governor-General should be the first President of the Republic it would secure a passage through the Congress Party of the Constituent Assembly, particularly in the light of the psychology generated by his departure for the U.S.A. and that he intended to move the Resolution at that evening's session of the Party. Sardar tried to dissuade him from that course and told him that his own assessment was different and he would rather not take the plunge. But Pandit Nehru could not be persuaded. He was sure of himself and of those who had advised him. Sardar got somewhat annoyed but spoke with some restraint; yet his annoyance could

not be concealed. Nevertheless, Pandit Nehru was adamant. I have a feeling that his pride was hurt since something he wanted so much could not be secured. But his decision to force matters notwithstanding Sardar's advice was to a large extent dictated by the misleading advice tendered to him. The die was cast and the same evening Pandit Nehru did move that proposition.

As soon as he had done so, the atmosphere became tense. His speech was interrupted by some vociferous members; the interruptions were not quite dignified and sensing the difficult situation he asked Sardar to speak and lend his support. Sardar declined to do so. Pandit Nehru was followed by a number of speakers who all opposed the resolution in strong and often bitter words. The debate became acrimonious and there was no mistaking the overwhelming sense of the party against the proposition. It was at this stage that Sardar found that the boundaries of calm and dignity had been over-stepped in the deliberations. He took the mike and made a moving appeal lasting for about ten minutes. He appealed for decorum and dignity and pointed out that notwithstanding differences, the Congress had always settled controversial issues to the general satisfaction of its members and it was unbecoming of them to exhibit such an attitude on the eve of their undisputed leader's departure on an important mission of friendship and understanding overseas. He had no doubt that given time and deliberation they would be able to settle the issue involving two respected leaders in a manner that would redound to their credit and would be consistent with the greatness and dignity of the high office involved and they should defer the decision until the Prime Minister's return. He wound up by saying that he had no doubt that their leader, who had never disregarded the strength and conviction of their views; would give due consideration to them and come to a conclusion which would be satisfactory in the long run. He appealed to the Party not to rush into a decision but to wait till the matter could be considered in a calm and dispassionate atmosphere free from the strain of tension and emotions.

Sardar spoke in pin-drop silence and the whole audience acclaimed his speech and nobly responded to it. All those present said that the speech was reminiscent of Gandhiji at his best and the front-rank spokesmen of the Party thanked Sardar for having saved it from a very unpleasant situation. But Sardar had seen the anguish and sorrow written on Pandit Nehru's face and he asked Govind Ballabh Pant to accompany him to his residence as he felt that he might lapse into a mood of dejection. He was not wrong, for after his return to 1, Aurangzeb Road and just before he retired for the night he received a letter from Pandit Nehru, written in his own hand expressing his dejection at the course of events, which he appeared to regard as a reflection on his leadership and the confidence of the Party in himself. He expressed his resolve to tender his resignation on his return and to ask the Governor-General to call upon Sardar to assume the leadership of the Government. He added that he was sorry to be inflicting the burden on him in his advanced age and current state of health, but Sardar had one

asset which was denied to him, namely the unstinted support and confidence of the Party.

I had not yet returned home though it was well past nine, for we were still discussing the developments of the evening. Sardar had got in touch with Satyanarain Sinha and asked him to ensure that the members were appraised of the consequences and not to carry matters any further, leaving it to him and Pandit Nehru to sort them out. Govind Ballabh Pant had also come to see him and tell him how Pandit Nehru had reacted after the meeting. Pandit Nehru had seemed somewhat lost and dazed but was gradually getting control over himself. But as usual he was not very communicative. Govind Ballabh Pant, therefore, had decided to leave him to himself. It was after all of them had gone and I was preparing to leave that the letter arrived. Sardar read it and gave it to me. He then told me that he would speak to Pandit Nehru in the morning when he would be seeing him off. This he did and found him more composed and receptive. Sardar told him to dismiss the question of leaving office from his mind and to go through his tour as if nothing had happened. He said he was sure that on his return the whole problem would be satisfactorily resolved and nothing should disturb his peace of mind during a difficult, taxing, but very important journey. The members of the Party had also mustered strong at the airport and there was the same familiar air of cordiality and familiarity. The tension had melted away and all of us settled down to our duties as if nothing had happened. Notwithstanding this, however, it was clear that the curtain had been rung down on any prospect of Rajaji holding the office of the first President of the Indian Republic.

The question of Kashmir was discussed but not in depth as Pandit Nehru had a detailed discussion with Gopalaswami Ayyangar. Sardar's view on Kashmir's place in the Constitution differed from that of both of them. He strongly felt that once the Constitution was framed and the States had to be fitted into it there should be as little deviation from the uniform pattern as was necessary. He cited the manner in which Unions of States were going to be fitted—as Part 'B' States with the difference from that of Part 'A' States kept to a minimum. (This differentiation had already been settled in outline in the Ministry of States though the Drafting Committee was yet to get fully apprised of it.) On the other hand the Sheikh was not prepared to advance an inch beyond the three subjects—Defence, External Affairs and Communications—the details of which had yet to be defined. Although neither Pandit Nehru nor Gopalaswami Ayyangar agreed with this view of Sheikh Abdullah they were not prepared to force matters and the Sheikh knew it. To preserve Kashmir's autonomy to the full, therefore, Sheikh Abdullah was prepared to fight it out. The usual considerations of the matter being involved in the Security Council and Sheikh's indispensability if India were to win plebiscite supervened; even a remote degree of uniformity with other States was given the go-by and the situation resolved itself into one of saving whatever could be salvaged from the wreckage.

I might here relate the incident of the virtual abdication of Maharaja Hari

Singh in the summer of 1949. Sheikh Abdullah had been mounting pressure in favour of it but Pandit Nehru and Gopalaswami Ayyangar, knowing full well that Sardar would never agree to it, settled upon efforts to induce him to leave the State and appoint his son Karan Singh as Regent. Though Sardar reluctantly agreed, he refused to negotiate with the Maharaja about it. There was no question of Pandit Nehru dealing with it himself. Gopalaswami knew his own handicap in dealing with the Maharaja whose Dewan he once was. The Maharaja was allergic to V. P. Menon. It was then settled between Sardar and Pandit Nehru that I should handle this delicate mission. It seemed so very unpleasant and hard on me but as a Civil Servant I had to swallow my own feelings and take on the job. In trying to cross the initial hurdle I fell foul of the Maharani who started a tirade against the proposal and refused to consider it. But after I had made the Maharaja realise the situation, particularly the duty he owed to his son for safeguarding his interests and salvaging whatever he could before he was faced with the local Constituent Assembly's demand for the abolition of monarchy, which was a certainty, he agreed. Once I secured his agreement, he never went back upon it and fully cooperated with me in arranging the settlement. All his essential interests were fully safeguarded—his own position and dignity, the succession, his privy purse and his private properties, his religious interests.

The whole arrangement was recorded in an exchange of letters between Sardar and himself. Sardar made it clear to him that the arrangements had Pandit Nehru's concurrence. When I informed Sardar and Pandit Nehru of my initial success and explained the conditions subject to which the Maharaja had agreed, they both readily accepted the conditions with obvious relief. Sardar always indicated his approval of my work more with a loving expression of his eyes than through words but Pandit Nehru patted me on the back in a manner he had never done before. The news of the final arrangement was of course most welcome to the Maharaja's son to whom a high office and prominence at the early age of eighteen/nineteen years were a god-send. I might add here that earlier when we were at Dehra Dun the Maharaja had sent his son Karan Singh to us to spend a few weeks with Sardar and he was assigned to me as my special-responsibility. We walked together and did some swimming in a nearby mountain stream. I had occasion then to assess him—an assessment which has not changed with the years.

As I have stated earlier, Pandit Nehru despite his agreement to the introduction of certain provisions in the Constitution was diffident about pushing these through the Constitution Assembly and it was agreed that they were to be piloted by Sardar. There were many incidents in the life of the Constituent Assembly during those days which were illustrative of the powers of persuasion and sometimes compulsion which Sardar exercised over his partymen and this was particularly so in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly during Pandit Nehru's absence abroad. An outstanding example was the provisions relating to the Services which now figure as Articles 311 and 314 of the Constitution. The former did not figure so prominently as

the latter. Article 311 merely provided for certain procedural safeguards against Government servants being awarded certain extreme punishments without due opportunities being given to them and could be easily justified in accordance with the principles of natural justice. It is symptomatic of the love of the politician for the path of least resistance that in order to make it easy to dole out summary punishment even this provision was found irksome. It does not matter if investigations take an unconscionable long time and enquiries take their own time, but another show-cause notice which should not normally take a month to be answered is considered now by wiser persons than the original framers of the Constitution as an abomination or a monstrosity.

It was Article 314, which gives protection to the former members of the Secretary of States' Services, that gave rise to difficulties. The principal target was the Indian Civil Service, the members of which often stood between the politician and the realisation of his ambitions which were synonymous with his patronage. It is true that some members of the Service by their rigidity or woodenness needlessly gave the politician a just ground for grievance but to my mind the average politician resented most the fact that Services were able to convince the Ministers against courses of action which suited the class of public-spirited workers. Many still harboured their old prejudices against certain individuals for what they had done or failed to do during the struggle for freedom. Others charged them with being reactionary and conservative and intellectually haughty—characteristics of which they did not have the monopoly. All these various factors clouded the judgement of some of the members—even Pandit Nehru was not immune from it—when they were called upon to deal with the subject.

Sardar in defending the provision, had to explain the background in which the safeguards were provided—the conditions of Service which were stipulated when they entered into a Covenant with the Secretary of State, the difficulties encountered at the time of negotiations for the transfer of power when the Secretary of State insisted on paying them all extravagant compensations and leaving the option to them to continue to serve the new Government or not, and the successful resistance he put up against this monstrous plan so far as the Indian members were concerned. He was able to persuade them in overwhelming numbers to continue in Service with the stipulation that their conditions of service would not be altered to their disadvantage. He noted the conditions stipulated in the Cabinet Mission Plan that safeguards for them would be provided in the Treaty between India and the British Government to cover matters which affected Great Britain, the statement issued by Lord Mountbatten with the concurrence of the Cabinet and the Provincial Governments laying down those safeguards, the dangers of dislocation and disruption which the willingness of the members of these Services helped to avert by their continuance in service and the fresh contracts that had been entered into with them at the time of transfer of power. He spoke of the undoubtedly distinguished services which they had rendered since Independence which atoned for whatever

sins of omission or commission they might have perpetrated in the past. On his presentation of the case he won the day and it was expected that the relevant Article would secure smooth passage in the Assembly. K.M. Munshi was assigned the responsibility for doing so and Sardar remained in his room in the Parliament House so as to avoid the strain of prolonged attendance in the House.

Hardly had he been for an hour or so in his room when the Chief Whip of the Congress Party Satyanarain Sinha came rushing in to say that Munshi had moved the adoption of the draft article but after some speakers had their say, Ananthasayanam Ayyangar had begun to speak in a critical and rather hostile vein. Sardar was greatly agitated and I began to feel concerned about him. I tried to dissuade him from getting worked up in view of his health and advised that he need not take so much notice of what was probably an exercise in letting off steam, but Sardar was adamant. He sensed that the example set by Ananthasayanam might be followed by others whose pent-up feelings of prejudice and hate might get the better of them and thereby a situation might develop which might need drastic treatment. He therefore decided to scotch the tendency in the initial stage itself. Wrapping his inseparable 'chadar' round him, thoughtful and annoyed, he left his room for the House accompanied by the Chief Whip. As he entered, Ananthasayanam was expatiating on the unsavoury past of the Services. As he saw Sardar enter, the tone and content of his speech changed and finally he ended up by supporting the article. Sardar's presence had both a sobering and steadying effect on the debate and I though the would not speak on the Article at all. But he sought the attention of the President and took the mike to deliver one of the most effective orations that I have ever heard from him. It was inevitable that in the circumstances any contrary views should be silenced and squashed and the Article was passed without dissent.

It is sad to reflect that the spirit of that debate and the high level of Sardar's winding up speech should be lost on the present generation. No nation can build a permanent niche for itself on the basis of ephemeral values. The permanence of fundamentals in a nation's attitude and outlook are as essential for successful functioning of Constitutional democracy as dynamism and adaptability. Neither ostrich-like burying your head in the sand nor convenient abandonment of basic normal values for the sake of indulging in fashionable fancies or apparently magical slogans or dogmas can lay the foundations of greatness of a people. The strength of national fibre comes not from bending to the prevailing wind but from resisting the force of stresses and strains caused by a passing storm or cyclone. History has many lessons to give us as regards the incompatibility of great tasks and little minds. The path of least resistance is not what imparts endurance to leadership. It is the capacity to lead a country out of passing attractive and popular demands calculated to give a wrong run to history which make leadership both worthwhile and lasting. It is those who are cast in a heroic mould and lead and not follow public opinion who leave a permanent mark

in history; not those who survive for the time being through concessions to public opinion by diluting or abandoning principles of permanent values. These thoughts are induced in me as I write, not because I am one of the Civil Servants or beneficiaries of this provision but because I recall the following words of that great speech :

> 'Therefore, for God's sake, let us understand where we are. Today if you want to take anything from the Service, you touch their heart but do not take a lathi and say, 'Who is to give you guarantee ? We are supreme Parliament'. You have supremacy for this kind of things. To go behind your words ? That supremacy will go down in a few days if you do that. That is my appeal to you and sincere appeal to you. You remember that and carry that to the Provinces also and to the Congressmen also who are working outside. That is the way and when it (the country) is strong enough, then if you want to make any change, it would not be difficult for the service people to be persuaded.

The provisions relating to the Indian States had been carefully gone into by the Drafting Committee. Some of the provisions were incidental to certain special arrangements that had been entered into at the time of financial integration, some arose out of the period of tutelage which had been considered necessary in the light of conditions that prevailed in the State. It must be recognised that in many States, there were only rudiments of popular institutions, and public opinion and political education was sadly lacking. Whatever the length of the period of struggle on the part of the State's people might have been, the impact on the overwhelming number of States was not comparable to the impact of popular movement on what was formerly British India. While Congressmen in British India had fair spells of the experience of running the administration in 1937-1939 and 1946-1949 and many of them had even an longer experience of managing local self-governing institutions, the same wealth of familiarity and experience was not available in the erstwhile Indian States or in the present Union of States. The Unions that had been formed had brought together territorial and administrative units which had been kept in the past hermetically sealed from each other. Education and experience in integration had yet to be inculcated. The organisation of political parties and political institutions was in its infancy in a large number of units forming the Union. However laudable the ambition of local Ministers and politicians in those Unions might have been to claim equality with those in command in the Provinces, the inexorable facts of the situation had to be realistically faced. Above all, it must be recognised that the stimulus or inspiration for integration of the type that had been brought about did not come from below but from above and the fountain head of that inspiration was no other than Sardar; not even the other leading lights of the Central Government or the Provincial leaders had harboured the vision of what had in fact been realised or cherished, the dream which had been converted into a reality through concentrated and

statesmen-like exertions on the part of that grand personality, and the purposeful inspiration he provided to those working selflessly and zealously under him.

Moreover, the whole process of administrative, legislative, financial and fiscal integration and assimilation had been accomplished within a short period of two years by teams of officers lent by the Centre and the Provinces under the vigilant and farsighted supervision of the States Ministry. Not only was the administrative apparatus set up by it but its training and education were also undertaken by that Ministry and its officers. Two years was too short a period to enable the newly constituted Unions to stand on their own legs. It is true that the Chief Ministers and Ministers of these newly formed Unions found the system of tutelage irksome and often chafed at it. But in the larger interests of the country and the ultimate interest of these Unions themselves, facts had to be faced. Good government may not theoretically be a substitute for self-government but it is better than confusion, anarchy and chaos. Learning by experience is proverbially costly but the cost of such learning in the circumstances would have been much more than the country could have afforded at that formative and critical stage, so soon after it had avoided threats to its security and integrity and while it was still in the midst of dangers both from within and without. Surrender by the Centre to misplaced importunities and inflated opinions about themselves on the part of local ministerial organisations would have been a disservice to them, to the Unions and to the country. It would have meant a different type of history than it has been our privilege to live through in the years following the inauguration of the Constitution, and an altogether different face of the country.

However, it was only the force of Sardar's personality and the eloquent and detailed case that he presented to the Constituent Assembly, read by K.M. Munshi on his behalf, which completely silenced the few voices of dissent. The speech was listened to in pin drop silence, and notwithstanding its manuscript character, ranked among the best speeches delivered in that august House.

In view of the present attitude regarding the settlement with the Rulers which the Dominion Government entered into and which were settled by Sardar with the approval of the Cabinet and the general approbation of the Constituent Assembly and the country, it would be worth while recalling the atmosphere that prevailed in the country and the Constituent Assembly at the time. I am not surprised at the changed attitude towards these settlements. Between Panditji and Sardar guiding the Cabinet on one side and Lord Mountbatten on the other, the entire mechanism and details of the transfer of power were settled. In all accounts at the time this was hailed as a magnificent piece of work. The communique relating to the Secretary of States' Services was issued giving the gist of the settlement reached, but not a whisper was heard against it. But when the matter came up before the Assembly, two and a half years later, the selfsame individuals indulged in some carping criticism which provoked Sardar to reply as follows :

> You now say, why did the leaders give these guarantees ? In order to allow you to have an opportunity to attack the leaders on this very point. What else ? You are responsible Members of the Parliament of a huge country. The Leader of this Parliament has been invited to America, the highest honour that could be done to him. He is treated with great respect. They are giving him all honours. You here say, 'Why did the leaders give these assurances ?' Think of the past. Why do you forget it ? Have you read your own recent history ?
>
> This is not a Congress platform. It is said that we promised Rs. 500/- for the Ministers in the Karachi resolution. There is a long distance between Karachi and Delhi today. It is a different thing. You want Rs. 45/- a day free of income tax. What is the use of talking about Rs. 500/- today ? It is very wrong.
>
> As I told you, this agreement and these guarantees were circulated to the Provinces and to individual members of the Service. Their agreement has been taken and signed by the provinces. They have agreed--both of them. Can you go behind these things ? Have morals no place in the new Parliament ? Is that how we are going to begin our new freedom ?

This was on 10 October 1949. The Articles relating to the integration of States came up two days later. Sardar's opening speech was a masterpiece of exposition and eloquence. A distinguished speaker of the House of Commons has said 'Oratory is the art of persuasion and the best way to persuade is to show a complete knowledge of the subject.' Judged on this criterion, the speech must be rated as a great oratorical feat. It completely disarmed criticism of the type I heard on the Article relating to the Secretary of State Service men. It is likely that Sardar's plain speaking and forthrightness on that occasion went home to the people. The debate that followed brought for Sardar much praise. Here I would like to quote one tribute paid by Pattabhi Sitaramayya, a veteran leader of the States' people, since what he said is so relevant today. He spoke as follows :

> One point I would like to mention and that is the privy purse. When a place is built especially in a clayey and slushy area which makes the foundations weak, more bricks are thrown into the foundations than are visible in the walls or on the facade. It is the facade that draws attention, it is the facade that is worked artistically, but the bricks are all thrown into the foundations never to be seen but always bearing the burden of the mighty edifice that is visible above. That was the foundation that we had laid in trying to bring the sixteen Deccan States into one Union and this is the second occasion upon which the Home Minister, who is the Minister for the States, has made a direct reference to the names of three of us in respect of the propriety of the measure of the privy purse that has been granted to the princes. We had to do the spadework and we had to offer

> a bait to our princes, we had to draw them into the scheme of Union. All honour to those sixteen Princes who had agreed to come into the Union for the first time at a time when neither unification nor unionisation was visualized or conceived. All honour to the Rajas of Phaltan, of Sangli, of Bhor and of Aundh who had taken the initiative in this matter and made it possible, on foundations which had to be well and truly laid and therefore more money had to be spent upon them, we had to give privy purses on a much larger scale. It was the fortunate privilege of the Minister for States to build upon those foundations and negotiate a much smaller privy purse and all honour to our Minister of States for having made it almost the minimum.
>
> Perhaps there is a feeling in the country and some friends who have no responsibility placed on them in regard to the administration of the State are fond of speaking somewhat disparagingly of the amount of privy purse that has been granted to our princes. Let it be made clear that there is no mistake made in granting these, which have been on the most moderate scale, and I am sure that as time passes perhaps the Princes themselves will feel that this kind of 'maintenance' life ill suits them. It is not the Princes that are so much the burden on the administration as the Jagirdars. Hyderabad has 1,200 jagirdars, Gwalior has 600. All these have to be liquidated and when you take into consideration the compensation that is due to all these people, you will find that in the proportion in which you have put an end to autocracy, you are also increasing your privy purse liability and maintenance liability. That is inevitable. But, as has been very well pointed out in this document, it makes for a saving of 20 crores which are the illegal allowances taken and of several crores which are the legally saveable from the budgets as they had obtained up to now. The privy purse after all is a small matter. It is the monetary equivalent of the moral surrender of the Princes. Moral surrender is what we want and all honour to the Princes that have readily agreed to such an arrangement. You can easily increase the resources of the country. You can easily decrease your expenditure by agreement. Therefore I must offer my congratulation to the Ministry upon the magnificent achievement for which they are responsible.

I also venture to reproduce the tribute paid by Shibban Lal Saksena who is happily with us today, having staged a remarkable comeback. He used to be often a lone dissenter those days but his persistence would be an object lesson to many dissenters today. It was much more difficult to be a 'young Turk' then than now. Shibban Lal more than kept the 'young Turk' flag flying and as his one-time college-fellow, I feel particularly happy to pay him this tribute. He wound up his speech on the amendment he moved with the following words :

> While I have given notice of amendments to this chapter, I do want to join in the chorus of praise which has been showered on our leader, the

> Honourable Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, on this historic occasion. I think this is the biggest task that has been accomplished by our Government in in the past two years. This one single achievement of Sardar Patel will entitle him to an immortal place among the builders of modern India. The British had created five hundred and odd States and they tried to divide our country into so many Pakistans. By the genius of the Honourable Sardar Patel and by the work of the officials of the States Ministry, we have been able to accomplish this great achievement. I join the House in congratulating Sardar Patel on this great achievement. Friends here have compared him to Bismark I consider Sardar Patel's achievement to be greater than that of Bismark. For Sardar Patel accomplished this revolution without shedding a drop of blood. I pray to God that he may be spared long and be soon restored to his normal health and vigour, so that he may lead the Nation to greater victories in the future.

II

With the main questions reserved for Sardar, namely those relating to the Services and the States through the Constituent Assembly, the Assembly was mainly preoccupied with the finishing touches to the Constitution. But one very important and controversial problem suddenly shot to the fore and that was the deteriorating financial situation about which one revealing and alarming debate had taken place in the Assembly in its legislative capacity only about a fortnight earlier. To the Constitution-makers, the problem had evil forebodings particularly in the critical phase of a developing economy. A harried Finance Minister John Mathai came to Sardar with his tale of woe and the Finance Minister expressed gravest apprehensions about the credit of the country if Government went on overspending; he expected that the balances with the Reserve Bank would fall below the statutory minimum in the following April. He confided to Sardar that he had kept the Prime Minister in touch with the deteriorating situation but he found him too preoccupied with so many other things; in any case the Prime Minister had confessed to him his inability to understand financial matters in their correct perspective. The Finance Minister's remedy was a slashing of Government expenditure but he found his colleagues unresponsive to such a suggestion.

Sardar listened to Dr. Mathai attentively for well-nigh one hour and by questioning him in detail, came to an assessment of the reduction to be achieved. He then told Dr. Mathai that he would do his best to help him tide over the crisis and asked me to obtain the relevant figures and information for each Ministry together with the Finance Minister's proposals for reduction, to study the information and to put it up to him with my comments. He would then, after studying it discuss with his Ministerial colleagues the cuts to be effected. This was accordingly done and within a week the process of consultations was started. Sardar, assisted by the Finance Minister discussed the situation fully and frankly with his colleagues

and as far as I remember dealt with three or four Ministers in a day. Such was the grasp he already had of the problems of each Ministry and such was the quick understanding he exhibited of the position of his colleagues that within a week he had brought them round to accepting the cuts and a much relieved Finance Minister at the end of the discussions acknowledged his gratitude to him in sincere and profuse terms and expressed his complete satisfaction with the results achieved. The news had a heartening effect on financial circles and the April position showed a better state than was envisaged at the time the cuts were discussed. But the Constituent Assembly was so shaken out of its financial complacency that there was a widespread feeling that some constitutional provision should be made to deal with a situation that might adversely affect the general credit and financial solvency of a State or the country as a whole. Accordingly, an emergency provision to cover such a contingency was sought to be inserted. The proposal met with some heavy weather but was eventually accepted under the impress of Sardar's persuation and personality.

But the general placidity of the Constituent Assembly was threatened much more by the proposals for dealing with the peculiar situation of the Jammu and Kashmir State and that situation was the creation of no other person than the redoubtable Sheikh Abdullah who had added to his other triumphs *vis-a-vis* the Indian Government, the virtual abdication of the Maharaja. He did not trust the Indian Government and while he accepted a constitutional relationship with the Indian Union he wanted to reserve to the Government of Jammu and Kashmir of his choice, the final words as to the detailed content of the accession on three subjects of Defence, External Affairs and Communications and any further accretion to such accession. He also wanted full freedom for the Constituent Assembly of the State to frame its own constitution. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar who had discussed the position in detail with Pandit Nehru before his departure, had prepared some draft provisions which had been accepted by Sheikh Abdullah and which had now to be put to the Congress Party of the Constituent Assembly.

In the party there was a strong body of opinion which looked askance at any suggestion of discrimination between the Jammu and Kashmir State and other States as members of the future Indian Union and was not prepared to go beyond certain limits in providing for the special position of Jammu and Kashmir. Sardar was himself fully in accord with this opinion, but due to his usual policy of not standing in the way of Pandit Nehru and Gopalaswamy Ayyangar who sorted out problems in their own light, he had kept his own views in the background. In fact, he had not taken any part in framing the draft proposals with the result that he heard the proposals only when Gopalaswamy Ayyangar announced them to the Congress Party. The announcement was followed by a storm of angry protests from all sides and Gopalaswamy Ayyangar found himself a lone defender with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad an ineffective supporter. Metaphorically, the situation may be succintly described by saying that both Gopalaswamy Ayyangar and his proposal were torn to pieces by the Party.

Later in the evening, Sardar received a telephone call from Gopalaswamy Ayyangar explaining the genesis of the proposals he had put before the Party and describing the scenes that he had painfully witnessed. He felt that only Sardar could intervene to save situation and appealed to him to come to his rescue. Sardar heard him and lapsed into silence. To my query as to what reply he would like to give, he said he would think it over. I then left him and returned home. Later in the evening, he rang me up as was his habit before retiring to bed and told me that he had sent for Satyanarain Sinha the Chief Whip, and had asked him to convene a meeting of the Party Executive, together with some of the prominent stormy petrels and they would discuss the matter; he wanted me to be present at the meeting. Next morning we went out for the usual car drive but I found him unusually reserved and thoughtful. I could not draw him out as to his line of action.

The meeting was held at the appointed hour and Maulana Azad was also present. It transpired that Gopalaswamy Ayyangar's draft was not acceptable to Sheikh Abdullah and Maulana was there to plead for his point of view. Sheikh Abdullah himself kept out of the discussion. The meeting was one of the stormiest I have ever witnessed, barring the Party meeting which discussed the proposition relating to Rajaji becoming the first President of the Indian Republic. The opinion in opposition to Gopalaswamy's formula was forcefully and even militantly expressed, and the issue even brought in the sovereignty of the Constituent Assembly to draw up the Constitution without being tied down to the apron-strings of the Kashmir State Constituent Assembly. In such a situation, even Maulana Azad was shouted down. It was left to Sardar to bring the discussion down to the practical plane and to plead that because of the international complications, a provisional approach alone could be made leaving the question of final relationship to be worked out according to the exigencies of the situation, and the mutual feelings and confidence that would have been by then created. In line with this view he felt that the Constituent Assembly or the Government of India must define in consultation with the State Government the content of the present accession but any further accession must depend on the willing consent of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir for the time being.

Finally, this view prevailed and Gopalaswamy Ayyangar's draft with necessary modifications was adopted. A last-minute plea of Maulana Azad to endorse Sheikh Abdullah's point of view was turned down summarily and the Constituent Assembly without much debate and with the non-participation of Shiekh Abdullah adopted the Article which later figured as Article 370. I was somehat taken aback at Sardar's acquiescence in the draft formula of Gopalaswamy Ayyangar and strongly felt that Sardar had compromised the position of the Indian Union and other States in accepting that formula as the basis. Frankly speaking, I was resentful of Sardar's attitude and when we returned to his residence during the lunch break, I was silent and sullen and repaired straight to my office room. Maniben came to call me for lunch; I declined to go and told her about the pain and anguish

I inwardly felt, adding that for the first time I nursed a grievance of betrayal on the part of Sardar. She conveyed my feeling of resentment to Sardar who sent her back to tell me that I should join the lunch table at least for a talk. I did so, accordingly. As soon as I was seated, Sardar spoke : 'So you are annoyed with me for having accepted Gopalaswamy's formula'. I queried that if he felt that way why did he not indicate his mind earlier. He said, 'I was deeply concerned at the situation. Gopalaswamy had acted under Panditji's advice. If Jawaharlal were here I could have had it out with him. But how could I do so with Gopalaswamy who was only acting under orders ? If I did, people would have said that I was taking revenge on his confidante when he was away. Gopalaswamy had appealed to me for help. How could I have let him down in the absence of his Chief ?'

I then asked why he had let down the country and the other States whose Constituent Assemblies had been scrapped in accordance with his advice and policy. He conceded the validity of the criticism but pointed out the delicate international position of the State and the issue of its relationship with India. We felt that the present situation had to be tided over without giving up the eventuality and this had been done under the formula. He said that after all, neither Sheikh Abdullah nor Gopalaswamy was permanent. The future would depend on the strength and guts of the Indian Government and if 'we cannot have confidence in our own strength we do not deserve to exist as a nation.'

With this high-minded explanation of his action I had no further arguments to put forward and conceded that he had shown both strength and statesmanship in dealing with the problem and acknowledged the sense of chivalry which had prompted him to come to the aid of a colleague in trouble even though the latter had been opposing him virtually as a matter of routine in order to keep Panditji company.

I am happy to state that Gopalaswamy fully appreciated the nobility of Sardar's action. I was fortunate to have won Gopalaswamy's affection after Sardar's death and was a recipient of both his trust and confidence in an unusual measure. When I was working as his Joint Secretary in July 1952 the selfsame Article came in for criticism in the Lok Sabha. In defence, Pandit Nehru took the stand that the Article was dealt with by Sardar in his absence and he was not responsible for it. I met Gopalaswamy the same evening as he was walking on the lawn of his residence. I questioned the bonafides of Pandit Nehru's stand. Gopalaswamy's reaction was one of anger and he said 'It is an ill-return to Sardar for the magnanimity he had shown in accepting Panditji's point of view against his better judgement.' He added 'I have told Jawaharlal this already.'

Here I would digress and mention that, notwithstanding differences with Gopalaswamy Ayyangar in regard to his approach to certain matters, Sardar had the greatest regard for his ability, knowledge, experience and intelligence. He subjected to earnest consideration whatever point of view he expressed for he was cognizant of its merit. What he felt keenly, however, was that Gopalaswamy Ayyangar was prepared to efface himself and subordinate his

views to those of Pandit Nehru without any attempt even to question them and would provide intellectual support to those views. Sardar nevertheless got on very well with him and Gopalaswamy fully reciprocated the respect and regard which Sardar showed towards him. In fact, at times I felt that while Gopalaswamy was over-awed by Pandit Nehru he instinctively reacted reverentially to Sardar's words. Hyderabad provided both of them with a common platform and brought them together. After this incident Kashmir began to provide a similar platform and I could see in Gopalaswamy Ayyangar a greater measure of accord with Sardar's views. When he succeeded Sardar as Minister of States it was an article of faith with him to stand by Sardar's decisions and policies. He strongly resisted Rafi Ahmed Kidwai's attempts to get some of these decisions unsettled. The clash came over the activities of the late Maharaja Pratap Singh of Baroda and Gopalaswamy threw himself into the fray with determination. Strangely enough it was that episode which brought me nearer to him nearly five months after Sardar's death.

One evening, while I was at work in the States Ministry I received a summons from him. He had a pile of papers before him and seemed burried in them. He looked unusually grave and anxious. After an exchange of greetings he asked me to sit down. He then said that he had called me to assist him in dealing with a most troublesome case. He told me that the problem was that the Maharaja by promising a contribution of two lakhs of rupees to the National Herald, had brought Rafi Ahmed Kidwai on his side and that the latter was exerting his influence on Pandit Nehru. Ayyangar's attempts to deal with him were thwarted. V. P. Menon and N. M. Buch had helped him to prepare the case but he was not quite satisfied. He told me that there was to be a meeting at Rashtrapati Bhavan between the President, the Prime Minister and himself at which the case was to be discussed to consider if there was sufficient justification for the withdrawal of his recognition. He wanted me to help him to draft it. Considering the bulky files before him and the time available, I expressed my diffidence in tackling the problem. He said, 'I have seen you handle more difficult and bulky cases so successfully and in a short time when you were with Sardar. Why cannot you bring to bear for me the same approach and attitude ?' I agreed to do my best. I asked him when he wanted the draft. He told me that if he got it by 7.30 next morning it would do. With that he handed over the papers and told me to call any number of stenographers I wanted.

I left office for home immediately after arranging to have four stenographers sent to my residence at 10 p.m. I settled down to a study of the papers which took me two hours. At 8.30 I snatched a few morsels of food and then began to reflect over the case and made a few pencil notes. By 10 p.m. I was ready for dictation to the stenographers; I did so in relays and finished it by 11.30. I told them to transcribe it and bring the transcription to me at 6 a.m. This they did and after correcting a few mistakes I sent on the required copies to the Minister's residence by 7 a.m. After about half an hour the Minister rang me up to say that he was fully satisfied with the

draft and he thought he would be able to convince his colleagues. After the meeting at Rashtrapati Bhavan was over he was in a buoyant mood and immediately sent for me to congratulate me on my performance. He said that he had shown the earlier draft to Pandit Nehru and the latter was not impressed. But when President Rajendra Prasad and Pandit Nehru had gone through my draft, the former turned to the Prime Minister to enquire what he had to say; the Prime Minister agreed that a sufficiently strong case had been made out and readily approved of the decision to withdraw recognition. Gopalaswamy then told me that he would have to call upon me for help quite often and hoped that I would be readily available. I replied that I was at his service and would come whenever required. Thereafter, he had several occasions to compliment me on my work but the most proper commendation I received from him was when I presented him with the Rajasthan Jagirdari Abolition Bill after securing the consent of the Jagirdars to its enactment.

There the matter ended but the incident laid the seeds of our future close association for thereafter, whether it was my own subject or some others he would send for me to help and invariably asked me to accompany him whenever he went on tour on States Ministry business. When in May 1952 he changed over to the Ministry of Defence he told the Cabinet Secretary N.R. Pillai his intention to get me transferred to the Defence Ministry. The opportunity came in July 1952 and I changed over to the Defence Ministry as Joint Secretary early in August. It was then that the first mediation talks were scheduled to be held with Dr. Graham in Geneva in the last week of August and Gopalaswamy obtained Pandit Nehru's consent to my joining the delegation as its Secretary.

After his return from Geneva unfortunately his health received a set back; treatment in Delhi did not yield any results and he had to leave for Madras. It was there in the middle of January 1953, before going a second time to Geneva as Secretary to the Delegation led by the late Girja Shankar Bajpai that I paid my last respects to him. As I touched his feet while he was lying in bed I could see a tear roll down his cheek; that has been a precious memory for me—a symbol of the affection of a great and loving patron from whom I received so much of consideration and kindness and who stood, in my estimation, for the finer values in life and for the best traditions of loyalty and service. He was a genuine nationalist, a great patriot, a counsellor and above all, a noble soul. Sometimes I wonder if he would secure a biographer who would do adequate justice to the singular contribution he made in various capacities to the formation and formulation of policies for well-nigh four years in different capacities—as an unofficial Constitutional Adviser in the Constituent Assembly till December 1947 when he became a member of the Cabinet, as Minister without Portfolio, as Minister for Railways, as a member of the Drafting Committee, as Minister of States and finally as Minister of Defence. He brought credit to whichever chair he occupied. He had a great deal to do, during this entire period, in influencing Panditji's mind, and was in turn influenced by him,

This mutuality of need resulted in a harvest of measures and policies which enlivened the pages of contemporary records but may now be lost in the too crammed volumes of Government business of those days. There, so far as this chronicle is concerned, the tribute of a grateful Civil Servant must rest and the reader must accept his apologies for this digression in a worthy cause.

Eighteen

The Twilight of the Dominion

In the meantime, the Prime Minister was busy travelling all over the U.S.A. and Canada and making speeches on India's foreign policy, though at times covering a larger spectrum of India's nationhood and its problems as a developing country. When he left India, Sardar had advised him to keep to the written texts when he spoke to American audiences. They had discussed in detail the problems that arose between the two countries, and the immediate questions like the Jammu and Kashmir issue, which had caused us concern. The whole object of the visit was to create a better understanding of our needs and our problems with a view to winning U.S. sympathy and support. The tour started under favourable stars; General Eisenhower, the future President and at that time connected with the Philadelphia University was particularly friendly. But after an initial period of restraint, Pandit Nehru spoke too often, too long, and too discursively. The situation was aptly summed up by Shankar in a cartoon in which he showed on one side the Niagara Falls, and on the other, Pandit Nehru with words coming out in torrents. The cartoon bore the caption 'The Niagaras were impressed.' Sardar was disappointed with the results of the trip but he kept his thoughts mostly to himself and continued to dispose of various matters in Pandit Nehru's absence.

This was an appropriate time for constructive action regarding the economy of the country. The dangers to the country's security from within and without had been averted. The Jammu and Kashmir operations had saved the State from a major upheaval; it is true that a substantial part of the State was still in enemy hands. But that was an area over which India could at best have hoped for a continuous military occupation of the type that the British had over the North-West Frontier or we have had over Nagaland. The shock of the partition of the country had been absorbed. The refugees from Pakistan were well on the way to resettlement. They themselves had behaved, with courage and were converting East Punjab into an area of prosperity reminiscent of the Canal Colony days. A number of new townships were coming up. Establishments of small-scale industries, shopping centres and village workshops were springing up fast and the scenes of misery and squalor which were witnessed in the months that succeeded Partition were becoming relics of the past. The Punjabi spirit of enterprise was producing miraculous results while the Sindhi genius for commerce and trade was rising to the occasion in Bombay, Ahmedabad and other towns and cities of western India and the peninsula. The country's unity and integration,

which at one stage seemed far-off, elusive dream, had been achieved at astonishing speed and without bloodshed. The two major threats, sponsored to a large extent by a hostile neighbour, one in Saurashtra and the other in Hyderabad, had been successfully countered. A spirit of patriotism and dedication ran through the entire country, which was at the final stage of giving itself a Constitution. That was to be the climax of a series of achievements which had come, one after the other, due to acts of inspiration and statesmanship unparallelled in its history. Concerted onslaughts on the country's secularism had also been blunted.

There was no doubt that Sardar had been the mainspring of action in many of these developments. He had travelled all over the country, preaching the gospel of unity and the need for united endeavour. He had dwelt on the geographical factors that united the country, and on its history. He had emphasised that opportunity had come to the country to grasp the chance which it could miss only at its peril. He had breathed hope and faith into the people and confidence in their strength and ability. He exhorted them to exploit the natural resources with which the country abounded. Ever since Partition he had dwelt on the need for a united endeavour unencumbered by class or internecine conflicts as the only means of the country realising its destiny. He also repeatedly exhorted the people to learn from the lessons of history, reflect on how India had frequently relapsed into thraldom and ensure that the unity and integration which the country had attained after centuries was turned to useful purposes to build the foundations of a great nation. Now that the country was one and the obstructionist elements had been rooted out, we only had to utilise the opportunity to our advantage and with the aid of modern science and technology we could eradicate our centuries-old poverty and take our due place in the community of nations.

This was the burden, not only of his public speeches, but also of his thoughts whenever he opened his mind, during discussions with me or with close friends. Opportunities to give forceful expression to his thoughts came to him on several occasions. But the outstanding example was his speech at Island Grounds, Madras on 25 February 1949, after the Hyderabad Police Action.

I am very glad to be broadcasting today, the birthday of my dear brother Jawaharlal. The day is twice blessed; not only are we celebrating a great national event, but we are also welcoming him back with all our heart after an eventful tour abroad.

Our birthday gift to him is loyalty and devotion; he has returned it with compound interest by raising our country's status abroad, and by presenting a sum total of goodwill and friendship which he has engendered wherever he has gone during his tour. He returns today again to resume the heavy burden of responsibilities which attach to his high office. Let us offer him our felicitations as well as our prayers.

How heavy that burden is and how great those responsibilities are, you

must have guessed in some measure from the speech I delivered on Saturday, 11th November, 1949, about our economic situation. I wish once again to emphasise the gravity of the situation that faces us and of the immensity of the task that lies ahead, if we are to stage a quick and permanent recovery. I can tell you quite frankly that the time for preparing paper schemes has gone; we cannot indulge any longer in the pastime of conjuring before our vision idealistic Utopias. We have to live among the hard facts of today, and it is in that realistic atmosphere that we have to think and act. It is no use our offering to a hungry man a rich fare some time hence. I have been constantly laying stress on the need for self-sufficiency in food and cloth, our basic want. We have spent crores on our food production drive without making any appreciable difference to our heavy imports, the crushing burden of which is visible in our dwindling foreign currencies and balance.

We have in hand so many schemes of irrigation. We have a huge area of cultivable waste which is waiting for the hands that can plough. Even the areas under cultivation can, with diligence and well-directed efforts, be made to yield more. We have a big reclamation programme which is being financed from the money that we have borrowed from abroad. In addition, we have programmes in India for subsidising schemes of food production. If we can concentrate on all these, I have no doubt that, in spite of the economic situation of today. We can produce enough to feed ourselves and reduce the heavy drain of freight and profits which we obligingly remit of foreign growers and shippers.

Just think of it. If we had at our disposal the amount which we have spent on food imports during the last three years, we could have completely rehabilitated those unfortunate brothers and sisters of ours who have had to leave their hearts and homes in Pakistan and who are still looking up to us for relief and succour. My heart bleeds to see so many of my unfortunate countrymen living in conditions of filth and poverty. Let those who pass by them reflect for a moment how they themselves are contributing to their misery by failing in their duty to help themselves and help us in ensuring self-sufficiency in food.

We always speak of India's culture, of India's civilisation, but do we ever pause to think that the relief of the poor, mutual and amongst neighbours, charity to the helpless and kindness to the downtrodden have been the shining virtues of that culture and civilisation? Let us ask ourselves if we are living in the spirit of those ancient virtues. If we are honest, we shall point the finger of scorn at all of us who demand their pound of flesh for every seer of corn that they hand over to Government, or, who store up their corn even though they see their next-door neighbour starving. The same applies to those who do not work assiduously to produce more from every inch of their soil, or who not only allow land to go waste but also allow foodgrains to deteriorate.

Are we to take Gandhiji's name only when it suits our purpose? I should like to ask all those who swear by him how they reconcile their profession

of faith in his mission with the everyday breach of the principles which he taught.

My appeal to the agriculturists is to work and work hard with a will to get the best out of their exertions and deliver to Government the maximum they can spare on the basis of their minimum requirements. They should help Government to implement the many programmes of increasing food production so that we can restore the balance between supply and demand of foodgrains as quickly as possible. Whatever area can be brought under cultivation must be utilised to produce foodgrains.

My next appeal is to the industrialists, businessmen, traders and labour. I need not stress here the importance which increasing production has in our plans to deal with the present economic crisis. In many ways it is our one and only hope to correct the maladjustment between supply and demand and thereby reverse the rising spiral of prices. Government, industry and labour must all play the game in a spirit of national service. We must all have the fullest sense of a national emergency; we must close our rank as we do in the presence of a common danger; we must tighten our belts to give the nation the tribute we owe to it; we must all contribute our mite to the creation of that huge reservoir of funds both here and abroad which we need to back our national effort for a happier and better state of living.

Let industrialists concentrate on getting the maximum out of their plants and machinery; let labour lend their helping hand to the industrialists to exploit their resources to the maximum national advantage. It will be Government's duty to ensure that the decks are cleared for action and there are no impediments, no bottlenecks and no red tape. The wheels must move with clock-wise precision and perfect smoothness and there must be no mutual fault-finding. The tradesmen have also to do their part. It is their duty to ensure that the produced articles reach the consumer with the minimum of difficulty and minimum of extra cost. None wishes to deprive them of their due but it would be a national crime for anyone to take more than one's due. On the other hand, even if one has to sacrifice something of his due for the sake of delivering the goods to the nation, that must be cheerfully faced. In such an inexorable and unrelenting struggle for existence, mercenary motives must not be allowed to rule to the exclusion of patriotic duty.

Let me also make a special appeal to those who have money to spare. It is, I know, a large body of heterogeneous elements. We are not spendthrifts as a nation; saving is our national instinct whether we are agriculturists, labourer, businessmen, lawyers, civil servants or traders. They must all save every pie they can and place their saving at the disposal of Government for utilisation in nation-building enterprises. We had a plethora of development schemes in the hope of large balance being available for expenditure. Now when we took stock of our position, we found that if we were to live within our means, we had drastically to cut out development programme.

It is obvious that we cannot keep this programme in suspense for very long without doing grave danger to our national economy. These programmes are our only hope if we have to feed not only the present, but the increasing population of our country. They afford the only chance of increased industrialisation, without which it will not be possible for us either to maintain or to improve upon our present standard of living. We must, therefore, restore our economy to a position in which we can implement these programmes to the best of our capacity and in an efficient and business-like manner. For all this, we must have capital and that capital must come from our own country. We may be able to borrow from international markets, here and there, but obviously we cannot base our everyday economy on foreign borrowing.

In my speech on Saturday I have already indicated why and how the investor should place confidence in us. I stated that a point had been reached when nobody who can save or has saved can afford to withhold investing in a profitable undertaking without incurring the odium of having failed the country in its hour of crisis. Indeed, it would be as wrong for anyone not to invest savings as it would be in times of war for anyone to shirk the obligation of compulsory national service. This brings me to commend to you the scheme, which we have announced, of voluntary cuts in higher salaries and compulsory savings, for Government servants have in this matter given a lead to business and professions which the latter would do well to follow. I am separately making an appeal to Provincial Governments to evolve similar schemes for their own employees. We hope shortly to supplement our own scheme by a similar scheme for Government servants drawing Rs. 250 and below. When that scheme is announced, I am sure Provinces will follow suit.

I would now appeal to business-houses, commercial establishments and men engaged in different professions and other institutions employing any substanial staff to adapt our schemes to the condition of their own organisation and to implement it cheerfully and in a spirit of self-sacrifice for the country's need.

All these contributions would, while assuring to the contributors some saving for future needs, assist Government considerably in strengthening its ways and means position and would enable it to finance the many schemes of development which on account of the necessity for imposing rigid economy have had to be suspended or drastically curtailed. 'Spend less, save more, and invest as much as possible' should henceforward be the motto of every citizen in the country and all of you must see that it becomes the guiding principle of your life. You can select for yourself any suitable means of investment which are open to you, but only make sure that all the money that you save is spent for a national cause.

I shall now say a word to those Government servants to whom has fallen and will continue to fall, the implementation of the many measures of control and of regimentation of everyday affairs of the citizen which we have to enforce. It is a great responsibility. The powers which they

wield, if rightly used, can bring the nation heavy dividends, but the same, if abused, can bring not only harm but disrepute. They have the reputation of many citizens in their hands. They will very often find that a kind word, a sympathetic gesture and an attitude of understanding coupled with honesty and integrity will enable them to do their work much quicker and much better than snobbery, a sense of superiority and such other departures from rectitude of which we find so many reports.

No one has done more to see that the services get their just rights and due need of credit than myself. If, therefore, I make a call upon them to do their part of national duty, I do so in full realisation of the fact that a large majority of them is actuated by patriotic motives and a spirit of service to the nation. They must, however, understand that the misdeeds of a few of them are as likely to injure the reputation of all as one dirty fish can proverbially spoil the whole tank. If the Legislature and Government place such large powers in their hands, they also place on them responsibility for using them properly. If they fail to discharge that responsibility they not only render themselves unworthy of the service to which they belong but also show themselves undeserving of the trust and confidence which the Government, the Legislature and the nation have reposed in them. Let them, therefore, so conduct themselves that every action of theirs brings as much good to the nation as possible without injuring anyone except the evildoer. If they can do so in this spirit, I am sure they will convert antipathy into sympathy, calumny into praise and sullenness into cooperation.

Finally, let me end on a personal note. Jawaharlal and I have been overwhelmed by the generous measure of confidence displayed in us. Having regard to the universality of that confidence, we naturally feel the terrible burden that we have to carry. That burden can be lightened only if we can secure all-round cooperation and support. My appeal to you all is, therefore, to extend to us and to the Government that cooperation and support and to help us in rooting out everything that retards the progress of the nation towards a better and happier state of things.

The Prime Minister returned the next day after an absence of five weeks during which he made a record length of journeys and a record number of speeches. The main object of the trip—to create a cordial and friendly atmosphere in the U.S.A.—had only been partially achieved. To a world still reverberating with the echoes of pre-war prejudices and affiliations though slowly turning, chrysalis-like into a new pattern of ideological or political alignments, his speeches portraying a middle-of-the road outlook, seemed somewhat out of touch with reality. Used to considering India as an appanage of Britain, the world powers regarded its independence of foreign policy as an effrontery. Non-alignment at that stage seemed an unrealistic slogan and to a world divided into two ideologically armed camps seemed a lost adventure. To a people who regarded communism as an arch-enemy, a plea for co-existence seemed sedition. Pandit Nehru's speeches

did not clarify India's stand; instead they caused confusion and confrontation, because the content of his speeches was so alien to their ears. However, so far as the country was concerned, it had dealt successfully with many difficult problems; the Constitution had been practically finalised; the people were poised for the historic step of inaugurating a Republic of their own albeit a member of the Commonwealth of Nations with the British Crown at its head.

On his return Pandit Nehru did not revert to the question of first Presidentship of the Republic with the same earnestness as before. The threat of resignation, on sober reflection, also died a natural death. Instead he was as was the mood of the country, looking beyond. In that mood, there was a greater disposition to dwell on matters of far greater moment Consequently the question which at one time threatened to have grave consequences receded into the background and after one feeble attempt to revive it he accepted the inevitable; it was agreed that Rajendra Prasad should be the first President. Sardar also announced, after the necessary formalities had been completed, the acceptance of the Constitution, as drafted, by the Rajpramukhs as well as the Rulers of the Unions, and of Hyderabad and Mysore in lieu of those that were to be framed by their Constituent Assemblies. The final seal of approval was thus set on the Constitution, the beginnings of which went back nearly three years when the atmosphere was enveloped in uncertainty and upheaval. The end came however, in a radically different atmosphere—a feeling of oneness, of strength, of hope and confidence.

One familiar problem, however, raised its head again. The upholders of a separate Andhra Province had not submitted completely to the decision to concede it subject to certain conditions, which they found impossible to fulfil. They were impatient and persistent and were not prepared to admit defeat. Consequently, before the Constituent Assembly adjourned after finalising the Constitution, a renewed attempt was made to secure the concession of an Andhra Province with effect from 1 January 1950. Pandit Nehru was sympathetic and tried his best to persuade Sardar to relent but Sardar was adamant for he held the view that if once the hard core of conditions was breached it would mean a gradual whittling down of the structure. He himself was convinced that linguistic provinces would let loose a host of disasters for the country and would be like the opening of a Pandora's box. He felt that if he had to make a concession to the Andhra Province for historical and sentimental reasons, it must be done in a manner that would not involve conceding other separatist demands. This line of thinking eventually prevailed and the proposal was dropped much to the disappointment and bitterness of the protagonists of the Andhra Province. Some further conditions were sought to be fulfilled later but others still remained and another attempt to revive the project so as to come into effect on 1 April 1950 met the same fate, with the result that as long as Sardar was alive no steps could be taken in a direction dictated by reason.

In retrospect, it must be acknowledged that the separation of Andhra

Province later and the formation of linguistic States like Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Mysore, Kerala, Maharashtra, Haryana, Punjab and even smaller States in the north-east has certainly promoted quicker economic development but the process of integration has suffered a set back. I am doubtful if without such separation, irrespective of financial viability, the persistent demands of autonomy as against a strong Centre and the problem of overdrawals from the Reserve Bank would have arisen; we would also have avoided the many border disputes which have led to unfortunate developments. The combination of politics and language to my mind poses a great danger to the unity and strength of the country.

Nineteen

The Eve of the Republic and Trouble in the Two Bengals

AFTER A continuous spell of arduous work for nearly three months after his return from Bombay, Sardar felt the need of another check-up and a period of rest. It was accordingly decided that we should spend the Christmas recess in Bombay. During this period a crisis had developed in the domestic field. Sardar had inspired the idea of a Congress daily to be issued from Bombay, collections for the financing of the venture had been made, the late K. Gopalaswami was selected as Editor and the management was vested in Sardar's son Dahyabhai Patel. The paper *Bharat* as it was called, had everything in its favour but somehow it was running into losses and Dahyabhai Patel and Gopalaswami could not pull on with each other. Matters came to a head; Sardar felt the blow deeply; though he kept his censure and blame to himself, he made it obvious what ruled his mind. Dahyabhai Patel had to leave but the mess took some time to clear.

This somewhat disturbed the equanimity of his mind during his stay in Bombay. Nevertheless, he passed the medical check-up and came back to Delhi the better for relaxation and relief from the stresses and strains of life in the capital. Hardly had he reached Delhi in the first week of January 1950, when he was asked by Pandit Nehru who was preparing for a short visit to the United Kingdom to go to Lucknow and settle organisational problems which had come to a head again in the United Provinces. Since U. P. politics is no less an organisational problem now than it was then and neither misfortune nor the passage of time seems to provide the solution for the ills which are taking a heavy toll of its economy and administration, I venture to deal with these problems at some length and when I do so let the reader bear in mind my indissoluble association with this area and my initiation into its politics at an early age.

I have a vivid recollection of the sacrifices made by thousands of Congressmen for the national cause during the freedom struggle, the high purpose which motivated them, their dedication and strict discipline and the skill and unity of purpose with which they countered the forces of repression which were let loose on them. Though even in that charged atmosphere, dissent occasionally raised its ugly head and rivalry manifested itself by and large they were generally subordinated to the call of partiotism and national service. To me, therefore, an insight into the real situation which I gained after joining Sardar came as something of a surprise and shock. The facade of

the undisputed leadership of Pandit Nehru seemed to cloak the dissensions and rivalries in the organisation. Broadly speaking, there were two schools of thought at work. One was led by Purshottomdas Tandon and Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and the other by Rafi Ahmed Kidwai The differences between the two groups were partly personal partly ideological but mostly manifest in the organisational field. On the personal plane the fight was about leadership. Both Tandon and Pant were much abler men and had a higher standing and a longer and more impressive record of public service than Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. The latter's advanced views on agrarian reforms, unorthodox ways, general attitude of friendliness and helpfulness to his followers and colleagues, his undoubted and unalloyed secularism and his strong partical commonsense had endeared him to a substantial section of Congressmen in the Province. I had experienced it myself during my visits to my own district, Partapgarh where I first had the privilege of meeting him and exchanging ideas with him in December 1937. But more than anything else his greatest asset was his closeness to Pandit Nehru, whose support he enjoyed. Then and even now I am of the impression that as a political manager Kidwai was superb, second only to Sardar, and that as a leader and tactician he was resourceful and clever, again standing in the same second rank with Sardar. The two were, however, poles apart in their methods and in their attitude to certain standards of public life. On the other hand, neither Tandon nor Pant was a politician of this type. Tandon was far too rigid and principled to be a successful politician while Pant's towering personality concealed an inner core of softness and abhorrence of the humdrum of a political battle. Since Tandon was rigid, he could stand upto Pandit Nehru but Pant would seldom if ever contradict the Prime Minister or speak a word in his own defence in Nehru's presence. He seemed to be over-awed by, or had excessive regard for Pandit Nehru.

The clashes between the two schools of thought were kept at a local level so long as Kidwai was a member of Govind Ballabh Pant's cabinet. In fact most of the troubles were kept within the Cabinet which had supporters of both the schools. Sometimes it did erupt outside but then Pandit Nehru's intervention settled matters before long. But it never took long for the two sides to join battle again with the result that the spirit of factionism ran through the entire organisation both at the headquarters and in the districts. On 15 August 1947 Rafi Ahmed Kidwai was transferred to the Central Cabinet; I remember vividly Govind Ballabh Pant's unconcealed pleasure at having been able to get rid of a troublesome colleague. I recall his telling Sardar with unconcealed joy, 'I have now transferred my headache to you.' Sardar told him then 'you are mistaken; he will be a greater headache to you from here', words which proved so prophetic in the succeeding year. This was because his leadership of U. P. dissent proved much more powerful from the nerve-centre of all India politics which Delhi had become, particularly since he became even closer to Pandit Nehru. What was worse was that Rafi Saheb kept himself in the background while others in Lucknow played his game. It was not so much Tandon who was not part of the Go-

vernment, as Pant, who felt the strain. High-minded as the latter was he could not always withstand the continuous pressure of pinpricks from Delhi. The result was a series of allegations and counter-allegations and mutual bickerings which erupted into a crisis more than once. Some of these allegations covered even personal integrity which upset Pant the most. There is no doubt that Pandit Nehru lent his ears to such allegations.

One of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai's targets used to be aimed at Pant's stay at Birla House along with his entourage. It was a constant source of irritation to Pant and eventually he had to stop staying there and stayed as Pandit Nehru's guest whenever he came to Delhi. Throughout' Govind Ballabh Pant relied on Sardar's support and in fact the din and bustle of battle were invariably left to Sardar. As a matter of fact, however, Sardar did not interfere in U.P. politics unless he had to. Matters, therefore, continued to remain in the state of flux. They would have come to a head when serious allegations were made against Rafi Ahmed Kidwai but Pandit Nehru's intervention succeeded in staving off the crisis. Nevertheless the quietus thus administered endured only for a short period and the two sides took up the battle again with zest. Towards the end of December 1949 open challenges were thrown on both sides for a meeting of the Pradesh Congress fixed for early January 1950.

Pandit Nehru would have gone to the meeting but due to his impending visit to the U.K. he could not go and instead asked Sardar to do so and make one more attempt to resolve the issues. I had remained behind in Bombay for personal reasons. Suddenly I received a call from Sardar to say that I should leave post-haste for Lucknow where he was going from Delhi for the purpose just mentioned. I pleaded that there was no air service to Lucknow and that the train journey would take twenty four hours. He told me to see if I could borrow somebody's aircraft. I said I would try. Fortunately H.H. the Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior was proceeding to Gwalior the next morning on his twin aircraft, a proven and comfortable aircraft and he generously agreed to send me on the aircraft from Gwalior to Lucknow.

I reached Lucknow the next evening and proceeded to Pant's residence where Sardar was at the time. I found him busy at the meeting. When he came out he greeted me with joy and thereafter told me how things had gone on during the day. There was an open clash at the meeting and he found that the differences could not be bridged. According to his assessment, matters had come to the stage of a parting of the ways and he gave me directions as to the lines on which I was to keep a draft Press release ready. He said he was going to address them the next morning in one last attempt to make them see reason but he was doubtful about the result; he did not, however, want any delay between the close of the meeting and the release of the Press statement and that is why he wanted the draft to be kept ready. I immediately returned to the Government House where I was staying and dictated a draft which was typed and kept handy for issue with such modifications as Sardar might like to make. This was near about midnight and I went off

to snatch a few hours of sleep after a tiresome and full day, for I had to meet Sardar again at about 5 a.m. with the draft.

Next morning I was ready by Sardar with the draft. He made a few corrections and passed it on to Govind Ballabh Pant and Sampurnanand who both approved the line and complimented me on the speed with which I had grasped the situation and put in writing what was conveyed in such hurry. The meeting was held as scheduled. The main burden of Sardar's appeal was that both sides had adopted a rigid posture from which none of them despite the need of the hour, was prepared to resile. In such a situation, where the majority was insistent on its rights and was not prepared to concede to the minority, it was for the minority to decide whether it would accept the democratic process of majority rule or drive its dissent to the extreme position of separating itself from the majority. He felt that the politics of the State had remained in a state of flux too long and that in the face of the recurrent troubles that were occurring, it was time that the position was finally determined. Consequently, he advised both sides to look at their differences in this light and take appropriate action. When the matters were finally put to the test of the vote, the minority proved to be much smaller than it claimed to be and the dissent led by Tirloki Singh could not muster any sizeable support in the P.C.C. Sardar thereupon issued the draft statement with some slight changes to bring it upto date. The statement gave a finality to the position and Tirloki Singh with a handful of members parted company with his colleagues and fellow partymen. We then returned to Delhi.

There was a sequel to this visit. Sardar's statement was generally welcomed, so sick had the people become of U.P. Congress politics. There were some resignations but Kesho Deva Malaviya who was a Minister in Pant's Cabinet did not, contrary to expectations, submit his resignation. Instead he wrote an angry letter to Sardar accusing him of partisanship and a few other faults to which he received a forthright and fitting reply. However, at the end of the letter Malaviya had asked for an opportunity to see Sardar personally and clear his own mind. Sardar assessed the position correctly and readily agreed to see him. He came and had quite a long interview with Sardar after which he seemed to have reconciled himself to the happenings in the State and to have decided to continue in the State Cabinet. This did not mean that he had ceased to be a 'Rafian'; it only meant that he did not consider it necessary or prudent to carry his dissent to the point of resignation of his office. But thenceforward it was clear that there was more homogeneity in the U.P. Congress organisation than had been the case for some years. U.P. Congress politics pursued a comparatively placid course for some years until in Sampurnanand's time it again assumed a factious visage, from the ramifications of which it is even now not free though more than ten years have elapsed since then.

All India was now waiting impatiently for 26 January 1950 which had been fixed for the inauguration of the new Constitution. The day had been earmarked years ago for taking the pledge of Independence; it was

approximately chosen for the greatest event in the history of independent India namely the coming into force of a Constitution of its own framed by the country's, chosen representatives. Hitherto even after Independence the country had been governed under the Government of India Act, 1935 which had been suitably adapted for the purpose by a series of Orders which the Governor-General had issued on the advice of his Council of Ministers. The new Constitution was in some ways akin to an eclectic pantheism in which many a shrine imported from various countries had their due place. But basically the framework was borrowed from the Government of India Act 1935 which it was replacing. The Constitution, though of a federal type, had strong bias towards a powerful Union and represented a compromise between strong demands for autonomy from constituent units and the paramount need of preserving the unity and integration of the country which had been achieved with surprising speed and miraculous ease. To the contemporary generation which had suffered from all the hardships and handicaps of foreign rule and which had borne long and patient years of suffering for the cause of freedom the event was one of fulfilment but there was also the consciousness that it was time for pledging loyalty and dedication to the future of the country. Thus joy and a sense of obligation and duty filled the air and the country waited impatiently for the 'tryst with destiny' which Pandit Nehru had so eloquently spoken of in his famous speech in the Constituent Assembly.

But Sardar was as active as ever. After Lucknow, the call came from Calcutta. Public agitation there was taking an ugly turn; refugees had come and were in a state of clamour; the pressure on Hindus in East Bengal was on and they were coming out in comparatively small numbers; there were incidents of strikes and the police being beaten up. All this made him decide to pay a visit to Calcutta and in a speech on 15 January 1950 at a public meeting he spoke with feeling and administered a mixture of admonition, persuasion and some home truths. Some of his observations are relevant even to the Bengal of today. He began persuasively. He said :

> I am fully aware of Bengal's agony. My heart goes out to the people of Bengal, but I am confident that, as always, they will face the difficulties with determination. Ever since India's freedom was at stake, Bengal has shown courage to every crisis. The leaders and the youth of Bengal endured great cruelties in the fight against alien rule. All India is indebted to Bengal for that. Later, when the alien grip was relaxed but the transition was still half-way through, the power was shared by the Muslim League and the British. That was a period of travail for you and you stood up to it courageously. Bengal or India can never forget what was called the 'direct action' by those people. How can the plight of Calcutta in those days be forgotten ? Nor can the subsequent events in Noakhali be forgotten by you or India ? Those pages of history — good or bad, such as they are — cannot be deleted.

Referring to our continued interest in the people of East Bengal, he said :

> In the part of Bengal that has separated from us, there are Hindus as well as Muslims. We want all of them to be happy. We want all wounds to heal quickly. For this, patience and forbearance are needed on both sides. Those who are our flesh and blood, those who fought by our side in the freedom struggle, cannot suddenly become foreign to us because they are on the other side of a line. There are people in South Africa, people of Indian origin but with African citizenship, whom we still try to help. If they have a claim on us, surely those in that part of Bengal too have a claim. The bonds of kinship and economic and social links cannot be broken. But to remove their difficulties, we have first to set our own house in order.

He disposed of the cult of violence in the following words :

> To those who think they have a substitute for the ballot box in the shape of revolution, I would respectfully submit that bombs and attacks on police are not revolution but a form of madness. It is the work of lunatics. I could understand if it were a few young men venting their frustrations in this way. But deliberate abetment of chaos helps no one. In the last war, a breakdown of the foreign Government's administration led to 30 lakh starvation deaths in Bengal. No one could protect them. But today when seventy per cent of the policemen are Bengalis themselves, what is the sense of attacking them ? They impose restrictions for our own good, not on orders from any foreigners. Any threat to civil liberties comes not from them but from those who foster the terrorist cult. You have to stop them if you want to keep your liberty. You cannot pass the buck to the police. No democracy can be run with the policeman's baton. It has become a habit with us to blame the police. We have to change this attitude. It was another police whom we criticised night and day. Today they are our volunteers. We do not pay them as much as we ought to because we are unable to do so. But if you do not have sympathy for them in the work they are doing today, you will regret it.

Unemployment has always been an acute problem in West Bengal as in Kerala, with Calcutta providing its hard core. Dealing with that problem he said :

> I am aware of unemployment among the youth in Bengal. Thousands of young men in colleges are having difficulties with their studies because they have to work in shifts, something which used to happen only in factories. They have to work in three shifts and I can understand their difficulties and those of the professors. The forty or fifty thousand who graduate every year also face unemployment. Something has to be done about it. Calcutta is among India's biggest industrial centres. We need the kind of

> wealth produced in the city as much as we need the kind of wealth produced by farmers in the rural areas. Lack of one cannot be compensated by the other. But the Bengalis have the least share in this industrial sector. What is the reason for this? Those who own the factories and the companies have a duty towards the youth of Bengal. Similarly the unemployed youth of Bengal must understand that we cannot discriminate on the basis of provincialism. We have to discourage such narrow parochial influences.

He was unsparing in his condemnation of anti-social elements; he harangued on the subject as follows :

> Inciting workers to strike, to go slow, to sit in will damage us greatly. These things may be necessary sometimes, but not now. Our Indian traditions are such that we can sit down and arrive at agreements. The rich also have to be told their duty. They made a lot of black money under foreign rule during the war. They thought it was all right to avoid income-tax so that the alien rulers would get as little as possible. But now it helps neither them nor us. Some people want us to nationalise all industry. How are we to run nationalised industries if we cannot run our ordinary administration? It is easy to take over any industry we want to, but we do not have the resources to run them, enough experienced men, men of expertise and integrity. Today when we impose controls on business activities about which there are complaints, no one speaks well of those who administer the controls. We are burdened with complaints of bribery and Government gets a bad name. Gandhiji advised us to remove controls. So we made an experiment which landed us in so much trouble that there were demands for reimposition of controls. Now that we have imposed controls again, some people say Government does not know its own mind. They are right, but, much of the government work in this vast country depended, for its disposal, on the prestige of the Englishmen who manned a little over a half of our administrative services and who have now departed. Today you see no English face among our policemen. British governors have left only their status behind. What else is revolution if not this ?

He dwelt forcefully on the attacks on the Police and the duty of the public to cooperate with forces of law and order in the following words:

> I read in the papers that policemen are beaten up at some place or the other every day. Some time ago when the police opened fire somewhere, people clamoured for trials and enquiries. Why don't they make as much noise when policemen are beaten up? Has the Government to function or has it not ? It can function well only if every free Indian realises that it is his duty to nurture and protect this freedom. The handful of people who are creating trouble should be curbed. Volunteer squads should be set up in localities where these things happen. There is talk of the

underground. The son, the brother or the relation who works in the "underground" should be warned to desist from the wrong path or be prepared to be turned over to the police. Without such active co-operation, things cannot be set right and the increasing expenditure finally falls on you. All the expenditure on police, jails, etc., come from your pockets. It is diverted from the poor needy refugees whom they are misleading. We may also have to provide for our brothers who are being prosecuted in East Pakistan and for whom life has been made impossible.

From Calcutta he returned to Delhi in time for the celebration of 26 January 1950. The celebration was on a grand scale. Panditji's genius for sizing up the public mind and appealing to its sense of spectacle and grandeur was fully in evidence in the programme of celebration; so too the joy in the public participation of the occasion. He was the grand master of ceremonies and his hand was seen in almost every phase of the celebrations. But before the celebrations, a sad event had to take place; that was the departure from Delhi of Rajagopalachari who was the last Governor-General of the Dominion and who yielded place to Rajendra Prasad the first President of the Indian Republic. The departing Governor-General was entertained to a lunch at Sardar's house given on behalf of his Council of Ministers. Another event of note was the resignation of John Mathai from his office of Finance Minister on account of the differences with Pandit Nehru on the question of the Planning Commission. Pandit Nehru was not prepared to face the resignation at the time and with Sardar's help the differences were patched up. From subsequent events it would appear that though the resignation was withdrawn by John Mathai, certain mental reservations were present in Pandit Nehru's mind, and that for him the parting of ways had not been averted but only postponed. Much to John Mathai's disillusionment, he was told only three months later that his services were no longer required and he was dropped from the Cabinet when it was reconstituted in May 1950.

Hardly were the celebrations over than a crisis in our relations with Pakistan began to develop. The exodus of refugees from East Pakistan which was a trickle to start with, was transformed into a flood and the West Bengal Government was overwhelmed with the situation. The feelings not only in West Bengal but throughout the country were disturbed. Pressure in the form of persecution was being employed by the Muslim community as well as the ruling West Pakistan officials who occupied all strategic and important positions, to force the Hindus out and convert East Bengal into a homogenous Muslim population. This caused immense bitterness all over the country and Pandit Nehru's secular policy was under fire. The climax had not yet been reached though there was no doubt that the situation was developing into an impending conflict with Pakistan.

In the meantime, Sardar had been greatly disturbed over the widening gulf between capital and labour in which even INTUC leaders were getting involved. It is surprising that the method of arbitration envisaged by its co-founders—Gandhiji and Sardar—for maintaining cordiality and peace

between the two main factors of production was entering into rivalry with the more militant Trade Unionism with its weapons of strikes, go-slow and stay-in-tactics. Sardar's attitude to the problem was clear and unmistakable; it was Gandhian to the core and its main planks were conciliation and arbitration but no stoppage of work. He was convinced that in the current state of the country's affairs where production held the key to progress and prosperity, stoppage of work was unpatriotic and constituted an act of disservice to the country. What he said at Calcutta earlier gives a clear indication as to his thinking. With this attitude it was inevitable that an outburst of Khandubhai Desai in Parliament calculated to create disaffection and hatred against employers should upset him. That evening he came back in a very disturbed and agitated frame of mind and he decided to speak out in reply the next day. He did so with so much feeling and earnestness and for so long that he had a relapse and for the first time there were traces of blood in his salvia, obviously as a result of overstraining his heart; it was virtually thumping and his pulse-rate was in the nineties by the time he came to his room. What touched Sardar most was that Khandubhai Desai should have cast aspersions on employers when they had no opportunity of replying to these charges; and that Khandubhai Desai unmindful of the change that had come over the tactics of the INTUC should still have called it the only institution which was playing the game, ignoring what Government was doing.

We first thought that as in the past his trouble would subside but we were confounded when we found that despite compulsory rest it would not. The pulse-rate persisted and with it came a slight rise in temperature. It was in this state of health that he was faced with one of the most critical situations in the country. As I have said earlier the influx of refugees from East Pakistan changed over from a trickle to a flood and streams of them crossed over the border in the most appalling conditions. Sardar was aware of the risks and dangers involved and at one time had warned Pakistan that if this continued there would be no alternative for India but to ask for or take an adequate area out of East Pakistan to rehabilitate them. This was not to Pandit Nehru's liking and he remonstrated with Sardar. Sardar had then told him that that was the only language Pakistan understood. So far as West Pakistan was concerned, the minority problem had been solved obviously to the satisfaction and glee of Pakistanis. Only a small number of Hindus had been left in Sind; otherwise the slate had been wiped clean. East Pakistan, however, still had a substantial number running into a crore and a half even after the initial purge immediately after Partition and the continuous outflow in small numbers that had been taking place ever since. What was worse, however, was the cruel fate of the refugees who had to leave all their property behind and there was no corresponding exodus from India which settled the problem of rehabilitation of refugees in the West. This meant that the refugees exchanged their comparative betterment in East Pakistan for poverty in India with no early prospect of divesting themselves of the necessity of charity and doles except in those cases in which they had well-to-do relatives in India or had some properties on this side of

the border or qualifications which enabled them to settle down in alternative employment or business. The numbers of such cases were comparatively small.

The result was that an impossible burden was being thrown on the normally hard-pressed administration of West Bengal, and public opinion in Calcutta and other towns was being worked up to a feverish pitch. Even in normal times the average Bengali is largely a creature of emotions and a lover of slogans; in a situation of emergency when emotions run deep and reason is at a discount tempers are roused and the whole atmosphere becomes explosive. Both the events and their impact on West Bengal had their repercussions in Delhi. The Bengali members of Parliament were both upset and up in arms. They canvassed and secured substantial sympathy from other members and a few became vocal and even militant. In such an atmosphere restraint becomes an easy casualty and unbridled criticism or angry denunciation a common experience. The meetings of the Congress Party in Parliament became quite noisy and acrimonious and Pandit Nehru's language of sweet reasonableness and restraint was construed as a sign of weakness. Pandit Nehru himself was in a state of perplexity. He realised that a complete evacuation of Hindus from East Pakistan would turn Pakistan into a theocratic and fanatically religious State which would spell continuous difficulties for India and subject its secularism to unbearable strain. He had no militant or even active counter to Pakistan's measures of expulsion and his diplomatic representations to the Prime Minister of Pakistan Liaquat Ali Khan were quite ineffective. Opinion in the Congress Party became so rebellious that a representative section of the members sought a hearing from Sardar and when they met at 1 Aurangzeb Road, there was no mistaking either their discontent or their temper. Sardar was quite forceful and forthright at that gathering and that assuaged the temper of those present. The news reached Pandit Nehru and he felt upset and unhappy, particularly at the thought that his policy of peace and secularism was going to suffer a rude shock. His mind was greatly troubled and distressed and discussions with Sardar did not result in any conclusion which could have solved the problem in a manner which was to his liking.

It was in this mood of helplessness, frustration and disillusionment at the prospect of everything he stood for crashing before his very eyes that he decided to face Parliament with a statement on the situation. This he did on 23 February. The statement was not received well by the Party particularly the members from West Bengal who read in it a scant appreciation of the position, a sign of weakness and an attitude of complacency. They were virtually in revolt.

However, in the meantime, Panditji's ears had been poisoned and it was conveyed to him by malicious eavesdroppers that Sardar was inspiring discontent by his forthright remarks on the situation. Even in the Cabinet meetings the atmosphere was tense; Panditji used to make a beeline for Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Neogy and Gadgil; they also provided an

opportunity for vicarious attacks on Sardar. Meanwhile, Pandit Nehru on urgent pleas from Dr. B.C. Roy decided to visit Bengal from where he returned on 10 March and came to discuss the situation with Sardar which he did for more than an hour. They failed however to find common ground, which irritated Pandit Nehru even more.

The exodus after a brief lull had in the meantime regained momentum and Dr. B.C. Roy sent frantic messages about the impossible state in which West Bengal was finding itself. Opinion in Delhi again became hardened. Pandit Nehru was feeling the strain; he became irritable and intolerant of opposition. It was in this state of affairs that Panditji made a statement on East Bengal on 17 March after his return from Calcutta on the tenth. The Cabinet was critical of that speech and members of the Party were upset. They even gave notice of a cut motion and wanted to see Sardar. They met at the House and Sardar pacified them. A few days later Pandit Nehru had a Cabinet meeting in which he was reported to have said : 'Cabinet or no Cabinet, so long as I am Prime Minister I will carry out my policy. I may consult them but the policy will be mine.' Pandit Nehru, however, began to feel that the Party was not with him. He accordingly expressed to Rajendra Prasad his intention to resign. Simultaneously, he sent a number of letters, full of grievances regarding Sardar, the behaviour of the Party and the situation in general and pointed differences in approach between himself and Sardar. He had been stung to the quick by the mounting disaffection in the Party and by the opposition in the Cabinet by Sardar and the Ministers mentioned above. In the meantime, Pandit Nehru had found other opportunities to pick up quarrels. He was obviously under considerable strain and in that mood wrote three letters—one a very long one airing some grievance or the other. Sardar was resting in bed in the evening when that letter with an accompanying draft statement was received at the house. Sardar read it and after giving it to me to read, lapsed into a thoughtful and anxious mood. I read through the letter and the draft and began to wonder what Sardar's course of action would be. The letter was obviously written in great anguish in moments of violent conflict between the head and the heart and mirrored the thoughts of a thinker and dreamer who felt that all his dreams which he had so assiduously cultivated and laboured to translate into action had come to nought. It expressed that anguish and conflict in moving words and phrases which made it clear that it was the language of a heart which had pushed mind somewhat into the background but the sentiments were gems of the 'purest ray serene'. After giving vent to his anguish he came to the operative part in which he said that he had decided to lay down his office in order to seek another solution, hitting at the possibility of his going to East Bengal in a non-official capacity—in Gandhi like fashion—to see if he could stop the rot. The statement was to be made in Parliament.

There was no time to lose. After I had read the letter and silently digested its contents, Sardar turned to me and said that a detailed reply would have to be prepared at once. He gave me the lines on which it

was to be drafted. Reason and emotion both were to be integrated into an appeal to reconsider the situation. He expressed his unwillingness to accept the burden he would be imposing on him. He wanted to dissuade him from misreading the import of developments in the Party and to put in proper perspective the present situation and its possibilities which could mean the country having to carry an impossible burden and being crushed under its weight. He laid the onus of action on Pakistan to which he felt we should all bend our efforts. He wanted to disillusion his mind about the chances of success of his alternative course; where Gandhiji had failed he could not hope to succeed. Finally he wanted him to give up his intention to resign and to delete the last couple of sentences from the draft. Needless to say, he wanted to assure Panditji of his full support and stand by him.

It was comparatively easy for Sardar to give directions as to how the draft was to be prepared. It was very difficult for me, in considering my personal association with them for the last thirty years, their deep personal relationship with each other at the time, political issues, and emotional factors, to translate these directions into a draft at such short notice and under the stress of an impending crisis. In order to prevent premature leakage, I had to do it in my own hand and that too, in a very legible style so that Sardar could read it. And I had only two and a half hours in which to complete the difficult task, for it was agreed that thereafter it was for Maniben to write it out and get Sardar to sign and despatch it to Pandit Nehru. I had to have my wits about me and make use of my historical sense, which, thank God, has never deserted me. I did finish the job a little before time and gave the draft to Sardar to read. He went through it very carefully and approved of it with some changes and additions and then gave it to Maniben to make a fair copy. It was at about 11 p.m. that I was able to leave Sardar wondering whether he would have the rest and sleep which he needed. Maniben wrote out the letter and despatched it to Pandit Nehru the next day.

The letter, however, had a good effect on Panditji and he wrote an appreciative reply. But the trouble was not yet over. Lady Mountbatten, who happened to be in Delhi, came to see Maniben and here is a gist of what took place. She advised that there was no good in replying to letters. The best course was to send for him and for the two to meet. Pandit Nehru would then unburden himself. He was missing Rajaji to whom he would open his mind and who always steadied him in such critical moments. In retrospect she said, 'if only we had come two years earlier, there would have been no Partition'. She had seen Menon on the day previous, when the letters were received. She had told him that Pandit Nehru had talked to her until 5.00 a.m. after despatching the letter and had told her that Sardar could manage the Party and it was he who had built up the Organisation. It was best that he carried on the burden of Prime Ministership as well. Whatever achievements we had had were really to his credit.

A day or two later Sardar did have a discussion with the Prime Minister. It was an hour-long discussion at the end of which Sardar came to his room cheerful and relaxed. I knew that the cloud had lifted, the gloom had

vanished and there was the same sunshine as before. It was then that it was agreed that Liaquat Ali Khan would visit India to hold discussions with Pandit Nehru to explore ways and means of dealing with the crisis. The announcement of the projected visit did not, however, satisfy public opinion in West Bengal which was distrustful of any parleys with a Government whose word could not be trusted and which called for an active programme against Pakistan. In line with that opinion and out of personal conviction, the two representatives of West Bengal in the Cabinet, S.P. Mukherjee and K.C. Neogy made no secret of their disagreement with Pandit Nehru and it was quite clear that they intended to carry their disagreement to its logical conclusion. They were only making time to see if the talks with Liaquat Ali Khan brought about a solution. Sardar did his best to restrain them but emotionally the atmosphere was so charged that counsels of moderation were of no avail. However, the impression that Sardar had agreed to the forthcoming talks steadied public opinion elsewhere and the country decided to wait for the crucial discussions with the Pakistan Prime Minister.

He came and stayed at Rashtrapati Bhavan. The initial discussions did bring out one thing, namely that Pakistan's Prime Minister had also been affected by the course of events and had realised the seriousness of the problem which apparently he had made light of in the beginning. The talks continued for some days; Pandit Nehru tried to bring Sardar into the discussions but he refused to be drawn into them. Liaquat Ali Khan sensed the situation and realised that Sardar held the key to it. Sardar had however, proved elusive and he did not know how to involve him in the discussions. One day after seeing Sardar, as I was accompanying him to his waiting car. Pandit Nehru mentioned Liaquat Ali Khan's eagerness to meet Sardar and asked me if I thought he would agree to see him alone. I told him that I thought it would be difficult for him to refuse if Liaquat Ali Khan himself asked Sardar. There the conversation ended. That very day there was a lunch at Rashtrapati Bhavan at which both Liaquat Ali Khan and Sardar met and the former invited Sardar to a quiet and exclusive lunch in his suite in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Sardar did not give a negative reply but pleaded his own health as a discouraging factor though he said he would try his best to accede to the request.

It was clear that he wanted to purchase some time through his move for soon after he returned to his house he told me about it and wanted my reactions, at the same time expressing his hesitation to accept the invitation. I told him that I saw no harm but a positive advantage in it for he would be able to gauge Liaquat Ali Khan's mind and assess the prospects of the pact which was in the offing and which, Liaquat Ali told Pandit Nehru, he would sign only if he was sure of Sardar's acceptance of the same. I also told him that he could utilise the opportunity to say a few home-truths to Liaquat Ali Khan. Sardar then asked me to inform the Prime Minister that he would lunch with Liaquat Ali. I told him that it would gladden Pandit Nehru's heart if he did it himself. He agreed and telephoned Pandit Nehru and from the trend of their conversation I could see that the latter

was both happy and relieved. Sixth April was fixed for the momentous meeting.

The next day the talks took place. Sardar only had fruits and milk for lunch. The discussions were frank and cordial. Liaquat Ali Khan was on the defensive but there was no mistaking the keenness and sincerity of his desire not only to stop the influx of refugees into India but also to secure their return. He visualised the problem in the larger context of relations between India and Pakistan and appealed to Sardar to give him a chance to repair the damage done, adding somewhat as follows :

> Sardar Saheb, you and I have lived together, worked together, shared the same history and culture but our successors will spring from new roots entirely independent of each other. They will not be friends and acquaintances but strangers and will thrive in separation. If there is a chance for the two peoples to come nearer each other it is now and not later.

Sardar on his part did not mince matters. He recalled the history of Indo-Pak relations; the way in which Pakistan at every conceivable opportunity had tried to exploit the situation to India's disadvantage and the fact that his own attempts to ensure that Partition should be as between two brothers had been rebuffed. He reminded him of his intervention at Amritsar to secure the safe passage of refugees and his appeal to him to ensure similar safety on his side, to which he had responded. Sardar had thought that that was the last exodus they would have to deal with but on the contrary, the exodus had continued especially on the East Bengal side. He also pointed out that he had publicly declared that he was no enemy of Pakistan and wished it well but he was bound to react if he felt that Pakistan was indulging in activities which would cause damage to India. He challenged anyone to show that India had taken a hostile attitude to Pakistan otherwise than in self-defence. He expressed his conviction that the two countries in peace could achieve much more for the subcontinent than they could in isolation and hostility and he was quite prepared to play his part provided he was convinced of the genuineness and sincerity of the effort on the side of Pakistan.

In conclusion, he said something to the following effect:

> I am nearing the completion of the mission destined for me. I am convinced that the two countries have to seek their own destiny but that destiny is in our own hands. We can fulfil it easier and better if we shed our hostility and live in peace and amity. It would be much more difficult if we are motivated by hatred and bitterness. Whatever the course of relationship between the two countries may be, I for one am not prepared to shed the ambition to see India great and prosperous. That would have to be achieved whether we remain friends or otherwise with Pakistan. Nothing is going to disturb the feelings of friendship more than the ill-treatment of the Hindu minority which was left only in East Pakistan and

therefore that question provided the acid test of genuineness and sincerity of his sentiments which he valued. He was prepared to respond to his appeal if the chance he asked for was the last one and he on his part would do his best if the arrangements he and Panditji envisaged were worked in a way to keep the Hindu minority with dignity and in contentment on the other side and if positive steps were taken to get back the refugees who had come.

The Nawabzada was happy at this reaction. He told Sardar that he fully appreciated his response and that he could be trusted on his part to play the game.

The gist of the discussions sums up the position taken by both the leaders and does not purport to recount the discussion in any sequence. It is clear that the talks were held in a frank and cordial atmosphere on both sides and that both the leaders were duly impressed by each other. After Sardar returned home he had his usual rest and thereafter when Pandit Nehru came he reported the discussion to him. Pandit Nehru was happy at having received the green signal for the pact and ceased to trouble himself about the threat of resignation from Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and K.C. Neogy. He knew that with Sardar's support he would successfully weather the storm. Thereafter things moved swiftly and the Nehru-Liaquat Pact was signed, sealed and delivered amid scenes of joy and approbation. Liaquat Ali Khan left for Pakistan, not in the atmosphere of sullenness that greeted him on his arrival but in expectancy and faith, engendered by the Pact.

During the period that all these fateful developments were taking place, another event contributed to the disturbed atmosphere in Delhi. It was on 7 March 1950 that the Hyderabad authorities discovered that Mir Laik Ali, who had been held in detention, had escaped to Pakistan. Sardar was greatly upset and for the first time I found him on the defensive in Parliament. Although he stood up for the local officers including M.K. Vellodi and D.S. Bakhle, he was far from happy. However, when the matter came up before Parliament, a procedural wrangle ensued over the admissibility of the adjournment motion which ended only after a fortnight when the Speaker gave a well-argued ruling against admission. But Sardar was both angry and unhappy and it took him some time to acquire confidence in the ability of the Hyderabad administration to look after itself.

Twenty

The Pact and After

SOON AFTER the Liaquat Ali - Nehru Pact was signed, Sardar had a long talk with Shyama Prasad Mukherjee to dissuade him from resigning. He referred to his talks with the Nawabzada and pointed out the advisability of restraint in order to give Pakistan a last chance to mend matters. He also explained the difficulty of taking any overt action in the face of this attitude of Pakistan, mentioning that international opinion would not look at the problem from the same angle of suspicion and distrust as we did. Mukherjee however, referred to inflamed opinion in West Bengal against the Pact and to the difficulty of his taking a line in violent contrast to the state of public opinion. He was convinced that Pandit Nehru would not take a hard line with Pakistan whatever the provocation and that if he failed in his efforts from within the Cabinet the only alternative was to prepare public opinion from outside. Sardar was unhappy at his failure and told me so. I then told him that there were certain aspects of the problem which perhaps I could put to Mukherjee but which would be embarrassing for Sardar to tell him. He agreed and permitted me to speak to Mukherjee.

My relations with Mukherjee were very close since I was of help to him at Bombay in dealing with the textile crisis and he had turned to me on a number of occasions for advice. I am happy to state that even after his resignation and upto the time of his tragic death this closeness continued. In fact, I was able, prior to his visit to Kashmir, to persuade him to take a moderate line in regard to that State and he agreed to do so. But fate prevented him from translating that assurance into practice as he was clamped in detention even before he had a chance. Thus, the cruel hand of fate removed from the Indian scene an able and fearless patriot, a matchless debater, an accomplished orator and a superb political tactician who, despite minority support in Parliament, was able to outshine and embarrass Panditji at the height of his power and prestige. When I rang up Dr. Mukherjee he readily agreed to see me and I sat with him at his residence for nearly two hours. I was able to move him from his rigid stand and he was convinced about the soundness of the points I made but pleaded that his commitment to public opinion in West Bengal had gone too far and he could not retrace his steps. I came back and reported the conversation to Sardar who was happy that an effort had been made but howsoever painful it might be he would have to oppose Mukherjee on this issue. Thus Mukherjee at last left the Government after a successful tenure of nearly three years as Cabinet

Minister. As he reached the boundary of West Bengal he received a hero's welcome and the scenes of his reception at Calcutta were unprecedented in terms of the number of people who came to receive him or who attended his public meetings. I should like to add that Neogy and Mukherjee had a grievance that on this issue of the Pact, they had not been individually consulted by Pandit Nehru though Maulana Azad and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai had been. Nor did they find any serious effort on Pandit Nehru's part to dissuade them from resigning. The Prime Minister once mentioned to Sardar that the Pact and the resignations might be discussed at the Party meeting. Sardar saw no point in doing so after the Pact had been presented to Parliament; in any case, the discussion of the resignation would only impart more heat to the situation which should be avoided. Pandit Nehru accepted this advice. Once, a meeting in Rashtrapati Bhavan was arranged at which Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Nehru, Sardar and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee were present but not even once did the Prime Minister ask Mukherjee to stay on. It was left to Sardar to deal with the consequences of the resignation.

The triumphal return of Mukherjee to Calcutta, his continued 'hostile' activities, the reactions in the Press and the adverse public outbursts against the Pact and against Pandit Nehru unnerved the Government in Delhi. It was feared that if Pandit Nehru went to 'sell' the Pact to West Bengal as was mooted, he would meet with a hostile reception and even violence against his person. It was in this state of affairs that Gopalaswami Ayyangar suggested that the Prime Minister should persuade Sardar to go to Calcutta. Accordingly, one morning Pandit Nehru came to see Sardar. As I have said earlier, Sardar's health had received a set back after his speech in reply to Khandubhai Desai's attack in Parliament. The strain of the crisis engendered by the exodus from East Bengal and the state of tension between him and Pandit Nehru worsened the state of his health; not only was recovery delayed but it was even retarded. The day Pandit Nehru came to see him his pulse-rate was still above 90 and he was feeling weak. Pandit Nehru hesitatingly mentioned the proposition. Sardar told him about his health and suggested that he should go himself. Pandit Nehru replied that the general feeling was that he would be stoned if he went there. He said that he was very sorry to press the matter in his present state of health but he saw no alternative as Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was building up public opinion against the Pact and only Sardar could provide an effective counter. He also said that he realised that April was not a good month to be in Calcutta but hoped that the weather would not be too unkind to him.

Despite his apprehensions about the effect on his own health, and his knowledge about the adverse nature of the Calcutta weather in mid-April, Sardar agreed to accept the tremendous responsibility of proceeding to Calcutta and trying to convert a hostile camp into a favourable ground for the reception of the Pact. The Prime Minister received the news with visible joy and relief and we all began to make arrangements for our departure to Calcutta, Sardar not only studied the Pact in detail but also familiarised himself with

Press and Public reactions. Kailash Nath Katju was then the Governor; we got in touch with him and informed him of our schedule so that he could provide for ample rest. Before leaving, Pandit Nehru also asked Sardar to look for a retired Judge of the High Court who could be entrusted with looking after minority interests in East Bengal in accordance with the provisions of the Pact. Sardar was also accompanied by S. Dutt of the Foreign Service who is now Ambassador in Bangladesh.

When we reached Calcutta we found Mridula Sarabhai there. Sardar did not like it thinking that she had probably been sent to keep an eye on his activities in view of his known views on the Hindu-Muslim problem and his sympathy for Mukherjee. However, he kept his thoughts to himself and did not object to Mridula being present at all his meetings with the Press and other bodies and associations. Sardar settled down to his task with zest. We arranged for interviews with public bodies and associations, with Congress workers, and with important representatives of public opinion. But the most effective and most successful of his meetings was with the Press towards the end in which he was able to secure from all but one their willingness to give a trial to the Pact. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was a formidable adversary but gradually Sardar acquired control over the situation. Within four or five days he had made good progress and decided to make a broadcast. He asked me to prepare the draft. During our stay in Calcutta we faced a day of acute anxiety due to an outbrust of communal violence. Sardar sent for H.M. Patel and V.P. Menon and Colonel Manekshaw who was then, I think D.M.O. Certain measures were decided upon which nipped the outbreak in the bud. This was on 21 April. For these reasons and for want of guidance I could not address myself to the task of preparing his broadcast. When he came for lunch he asked me if I had done so. I told him about my difficulty. He then told me that he would discuss it with me after lunch, which he did for twenty minutes.

I sat down immediately to write out the draft in my own hand and then got it typed but by the time he left for his afternoon discussions it was not ready. He could go through it only when he returned for tea. He made a few corrections and asked me to insert a reference to Satish Babu which I did, and by the time he came for dinner, four copies were ready. He went through it twice. He made the broadcast with unusual clarity and put a considerable amount of feeling into it. To my mind it was his most impressive performance on the radio. It had a remarkable effect on the listeners and was much appreciated when it appeared the next day in print. Since it sums up his attitude on the Pact and also gives a broad summary of the arguments he employed during his many discussions, I am giving below selected extracts. After a few words of solace and sympathy for the refugees he referred to the general grievance that Pakistan had not honoured the previous agreements and that the Pact did not solve the problems and said:

> I know that in the light of past history of agreements which have fallen in disuse, or pledges which have been broken, people approached the

> latest Agreement with sceptical cynicism and even convinced disbelief. The researches in such past made by critics have yielded no new discoveries or facts which were not known to those who undertook upon themselves the burden of implementing the Agreement. Human nature, as far as I am aware places no limit of time on its capacity to change; even death-bed repentence or remorse acquires a religious merit of its own. Therefore, to accept on the basis of past remissness, future bad faith as an unalterable fact denotes a lack of faith in the basic goodness of human nature which constitutes the very element of our philosophy.

He knew that the refugees were an important section of West Bengal population and at the same time the main cause of roused public feeling. He therefore began by addressing himself to them in the following words:

> Never before I have felt the handicap of my health so bitterly and poignantly as during these busy days, for that has deprived me of the opportunity of personally extending, to our unfortunate brothers and sisters, who have suffered and borne so much, a few words of sympathy and solace.
>
> My first task this evening, therefore, is to ask them to extend a little consideration and understanding to me in my physical incapacity and to say that they have constantly been in my thoughts, and their sufferings and sorrows have throughout engaged my attention during the many wakeful hours of the day and the night which I have devoted, whether in discussions or alone, to the cruel fate which an unrelenting destiny has visited on them.
>
> Throughout the critical weeks, my mind and heart have been with them. When I felt that an opportunity had come my way to contribute towards their speedy relief and alleviation of the pangs which tormented them, I rushed to Calcutta to assuage their feelings, closely and intimately to appreciate their situation, and to make them understand, as dispassionately as possibles their duty in this critical hour.

Explaining his own attitude towards the latest Agreement he eloquently pleaded :

> I also know that my West Bengal friends are genuinely worried about the concept of an Islamic State and the consequences which, in the light of history, such a concept is taken to entail. In the face of a clear acceptance of the fundamental principles of democracy by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, we have no alternative but to mark time and to put it to the test. The one thing that made a profound impression on me in accepting the Pakistan Prime Minister's assurances at their face value was the earnestness and visible sincerity with which he laid stress on the need for bringing the two countries closer in our life-time. We have at least the background of previous associations and of past friendships and goodwill, the new generation will grow under the full belief and faith in absolute separatism.

To the advocates of militancy he retorted:

I regard it profitless at this stage to enter into any disputation of respective responsibility for the tragedies that have occurred on both sides of the border. I can tell my West Bengal friends quite candidly that it is the ugly and deplorable incidents which happened on our side of the border that made a world of difference to our capacity and freedom to deal with the problem more effectively and expeditiously To counsel firmness and consistency in such circumstances or to charge Government with weakness, hesitancy or inconsistency, is to ignore the elementary rule of prudence that one can act correctly only when one's conscience is clear and not clouded by one's own guilt. Those who demand more heroic remedies will do well to ponder over this simple fact. Similarly, you cannot talk of peace and in the same breath raise clouds of suspicion and of distrust. If the talk of peace within the country has any meaning, it is the bounden duty of all who profess to guide public opinion to think, say and act in such a manner as not to rouse the latent or active forces of discontent, hostility and bitterness. In such a contingency, the power of the pen has to be wielded with a grave sense of responsibility. Where the destinies of millions are involved, the instrument of speech is to be used to soothe rather than to hurt, to assuage rather than to alienate, to heal rather than to wound.

Dealing with broad features of the agreement he observed:

Let me now briefly explain why I feel that the Indo-Pakistan Agreement gives a reasonable chance, if worked in the proper spirit, for retrieving the ground that has been lost during the last two years. For the first time, we have provided for supervision and control over the day-to-day implementation of the Agreement. The Central Minister of the Government of India and a representative of minorities in the Provincial Cabinet of Pakistan will be there to ensure that the Agreement is implemented in Pakistan in letter and in spirit. The Central Minister would be associated with the functioning of the Minority Commission which would in its turn be the watchdog of the minority's interest in East Pakistan. Thus, for the first time, a readily available avenue of redress has been provided to a minority community and it should not be difficult for us to find out any margin between professions and practice. In these circumstances, it seems to me essential that we, on our part, should give no excuse or justification for any failure of the Agreement in East Pakistan.

Then, explaining the attitude of Government, he emphasised:

The Policy of the Government is clear and unequivocal. They will strain their utmost to implement this Agreement and, at the same time, to make the lot of those who have come away as happy as possible. In the sacred

> task of extending relief to them, we shall not recognise my [sic] state boundaries, nor stint any resources that we can command. In that task, the Central Government will hold the hand of the West Bengal Government to the utmost of its strength and capacity. We are already encouraged in our efforts by the support which we have received from all State Governments and the promise of help and co-operation which they have offered. We shall also undertake the task of rehabilitating those who might eventually decide to make India their permanent abode. I would, however, appeal to them to lend a helping hand in this two-fold task by complying with such directions and arrangements as the Government of West Bengal might make for their relief or rehabilitation, whether inside or outside of West Bengal. It has pained me considerably that interested persons should exploit this opportunity for dissuading refugees from leaving for their allotted places outside West Bengal and for pressing upon them the need for asking for relief or rehabilitation within the area of West Bengal itself.

Finally, appealing to the emotions of his listeners and the wider audience he knew he would command the next morning, he eloquently made a plea:

> Finally, friends, as one who can conscientiously say that he has not allowed to let slip one single opportunity of promoting the cause of minorities in Pakistan and of safeguarding their interest by all such means as were open to us in this country, it is my earnest appeal to you to make up your minds quickly to give the Indo-Pakistan Agreement a fair trial.
>
> Let us not indulge in impotent rage or mere supercharged emotional outbursts. Instead, let us make a constructive, helpful and whole-hearted contribution to the relief of suffering humanity on both sides of the border and help make their lot a more toler able one. The lot of mortal existence is already a hard one; let us not make it harder by refusing to avail ourselves of the opportunities for softening or sweetening it. Nor let us make any false move which would put us in the wrong and invoke for us the verdict of history that we shirked our responsibilities in an hour of crisis when there was a chance of saving millions from a catastrophic end. Let not emotions and prejudices overpower our reason. Let us face the problem as human realists comprehending fully the limitations within which we have to work and taking our stand on trust and confidence when a reasonable atmosphere has been created for these virtues to play their part. I am sure that if we approach the present situation in this spirit and if we discharge to the full obligations which we have incurred under a sense of national honour and prestige we shall have done our part in a big-hearted attempt to heal the wounds and to reverse the process of misunderstanding and bitterness which have unfortunately marred our relationship with Pakistan ever since its inception. If we succeed, we might, in a humble way, have started an era of

peace, understanding and good neighbourliness. If, God forbid, we fail, we shall have had the satisfaction of having explored the last possibility of a peaceful solution of a potentially dangerous problem.

The next day Sardar left Calcutta for Delhi, happy in the thought that he had fulfilled the mission entrusted to him by the Prime Minister. Even during his stay it became clear that he had proved to be more than an effective counter to Shyama Prasad Mukherjee's efforts in West Bengal which were directed against the Pact. At the end of his stay and after his broadcast, the reactions were even more favourable and both the Government and the people of West Bengal settled down to the implementation of the Pact. The key figure was to be the new Minister for Minorities in the Central Cabinet. After consulting the Governor and Chief Minister, Sardar restricted his choice to Radha Binod Pal of the Tojo trial fame and Justice C.C. Biswas, who had acquired a reputation for independence of outlook as a result of a liberal judgement during the worst face of the Quit India struggle. Sardar asked both of them to see him. He was unimpressed by Pal, he thought that he was militant and biased. He, therefore, preferred Justice Biswas who was accordingly appointed Minister for Minorities in Central Government.

In the meantime, another important development had occurred. Pandit Nehru missed Rajagopalachari's presence and shortly after his departure began to plan his return. Rajagopalachari quite rightly made it a condition that Sardar should agree to his return and write to him to come. Pandit Nehru sounded Sardar. The latter pointed out the impropriety of inviting a retired Governor-General, Head of the State at one time, to be a Member of the Cabinet, except in a grave emergency. In normal times he could be considered only for an important diplomatic assignment such as Ambassador in Washington or High Commissioner in London or for the post of Minister of External Affairs. Pandit Nehru after two or three unsuccessful attempts to secure Sardar's concurrence, agreed that Rajaji should be given the External Affairs portfolio. He also suggested that Rajaji might be sent to East Bengal to help in repairing the damage done. But Sardar was sceptical; however the proposal fell through as Rajaji could not be contacted owing to his being confined to his rooms due to an eye infection. It was only after a few days that Sardar could write to Rajaji requesting him to come and join the Cabinet. The letter, as far as I remember was sent early in April and Rajaji came towards the latter part of the month. As soon as he came Sardar was involved in plans for reshuffling the Cabinet and it became clear rather soon that John Mathai would be the first casualty. Mathai's exit reminds me of Mark Antony's outburst, 'What a fall was there my countrymen.' When he came to Delhi as a member of the Interim Government, he was a great admirer of Pandit Nehru. The honeymoon lasted for a couple of years but in 1949 were sown the seeds of the eventual parting of ways. On Hyderabad, Mathai differed from Pandit Nehru but the first disillusionment came when he found the Prime Minister taking no interest in the

deteriorating financial position and he had to turn to Sardar in Pandit Nehru's absence to rectify matters. Before that, in July-August there was an open clash in the Party meeting between the Prime Minister and John Mathai over the provisions relating to compensation for acquisition of property. Mathai thus expressed the view that if those were the P.M.'s views he had no place in his Cabinet. Pandit Nehru was going to ask for his resignation but Rajaji successfully intervened to prevent it. Finally came the differences over the 'powers and functions' of the Planning Commission. Mathai took the stand that these would severly undermine the functioning of the Finance Ministry and I think subsequent events have proved that Mathai was mostly right in this view; unfortunately the disastrous consequences of the division of functions became apparent long after the mischief was done. Mathai on this occasion actually sent in his resignation but Pandit Nehru in order not to create a crisis at the very start of the Planning Commission, persuaded him to withdraw it. The exit came in May when Mathai was dropped after a month of the reshuffle of the Cabinet on 6 May 1949. Sardar was unhappy about it but he knew that Pandit Nehru did not take kindly to any one crossing his path and particularly if it was done with strength and boldness as Mathai was used to doing. Mathai was bitter at the outcome and he gave vent to his feelings when he met Sardar. The question of his successor was left undecided.

The strain of the visit to Calcutta at the time when the heat was at its peak and the hard and ceaseless mental work and physical labour which Sardar had to undergo, prolonged the state of his ill-health. He was not well when he returned though he had the satisfaction of succeeding where everyone thought that it would be a most difficult task. While the cheer that had deserted him during the critical days of the East Bengal refugee crisis returned, his physical condition gave cause for concern. However, the formulation of the new Cabinet engaged him, Rajaji and the Prime Minister. After considerable discussions the team was completed and the new Cabinet having one or two new Members, Rajaji being one of them, was sworn in on 6 May 1950. Thereafter, it was decided that Sardar should leave for Bombay and after a medical check-up take a sea-voyage on the INS Delhi, the flagship of the Indian Navy, under Vice-Admiral Barnard. We thought that a trip to Cochin would do him good. Accordingly, we left for Bombay where he was again examined by Drs. Gilder and Nathubhai Patel who found a retardation in his recovery from the set back of June-August 1949, and a deterioration from the beneficient effect of his convalescence in September 1949. They agreed that a sea trip would benefit his health.

There was, however, one hitch. Sardar could not do without Maniben, and with a benevolent regard for me insisted that my family should also accompany me. But there was a convention if not a rule that no ladies were allowed on board, let alone stay there. After some reluctance, this prohibition was relaxed in our favour and we could leave for Cochin on board the Indian Naval Flagship. Sardar was received by Admiral Barnard on board the ship to the accompaniment of a bugle, a guard of honour and the usual

salute. We were comfortably provided with accommodation and I informed both the Admiral and the Commander of INS Delhi, Captain (now Admiral) Chatterjee, of the dietetic chart of Sardar as well as his timings. Sardar, after a few hours of respite from visitors, files and telephones was feeling quite refreshed. The salubrious sea breeze did him good. We all stood the sea well; I was a tried sailor but Sardar had felt very seasick during his first voyage to England. But the sea was comparatively calm and the ship was quite even on its keel.

Life at sea was quiet, restful and enjoyable. Sardar had ample time for discussions of both a light and heavy nature. We spent some time playing cards. That used to be our pastime in Dehra Dun as well. We felt at home on the ship, spending our time with the ship's officers and men. The medical officer of the ship, Commander Dave, was a competent and cheerful doctor My younger daughter Leela became quite friendly with him. I remember her asking him to bring something for her from the ship's shop and when he returned the change she asked him to keep it. Admiral Barnard was a brilliant officer I discussed quite a number of naval problems and naval strategy with him and we became friends. Sardar also exchanged ideas freely with him. He was a liberal Scot and had a conscientious approach to his responsibilities. Captain Chatterjee was not only full of *bonhommie* but also mindful of our comforts.

During the day we used to identify the town on land. As we passed Goa, Sardar asked the Admiral to take us as near the coast as he could, and he did. When we were just opposite Goa he asked the Admiral how long it would take to effect a landing on Goanese shores and he said, a matter of a few hours describing the guns and fortifications he would have to contend with. Sardar turned to him and said, 'I wish I could ask you to do it at once.' Earlier, Sardar had witnessed an exercise at sea in which other ships, Rana and Ranjit as far as I remember and some mine-sweepers were involved. It was an education in itself and he exhibited a great deal of interest in it. I was invited to be 'roped' across to a ship and brought back. I thankfully declined the adventure.

As we passed Karwar and Mangalore, the local Congressmen wanted to come on board and meet Sardar. That posed a problem for obviously the Navy could not be used for political purposes. We solved it by giving strict instructions that no political problems were to be raised and that the meeting was to be treated as a social one intended for renewing old acquaintances. This was generally adhered to. The meetings provided me with yet another insight into Sardar's hold on Congressmen in far-off places. I found that all the leading lights of these places were well-known to Sardar who not only recognised them but exchanged anecdotes of olden days. Eventually, we anchored off Cochin where the *Rajpramukh* of the State of Travancore-Cochin, the Ruler of Travancore, the Ruler of Cochin and the Chief Minister T.K. Narayan Pillai and his colleagues, the naval establishment of Cochin and anyone of consequence in that city, were waiting to receive Sardar. We got into a launch and were taken to the Bolghatti

Palace, picturesquely situated on an island and having access to the mainland only by means of a launch.

Sardar had quite a busy yet enjoyable programme. Mathai had recommended his brother-in-law E.J. Philippose to us, who was a Minister in the Cabinet, and he and I got on very well. We both shared a love of sport and his particular fancy was boating. During our stay he had arranged for a boating competition involving a special kind of boats peculiar to this area. On the day of the competition we had many boats, all full of oarsmen and their supporters. The shore was lined with a crowd several men deep. The event was a great public attraction and each competing boat had its own supporters on shore. Philippose was himself on one of the boats and encouraged the oarsmen by crying himself hoarse. The boats moved very fast indeed and after an exciting race the competition was over and Sardar distributed the prizes. After our halt in Cochin, we proceeded to Trivandrum where we stayed as the guests of the *Rajpramukh*. The visit again created a great deal of interest, particularly because of differences of opinion in the State Cabinet. Narayan Pillai was accused of siding with the Christian members of his Cabinet. Pattom Thanu Pillai who had been replaced by Narayan Pillai, had expressed his desire of parting company and joining the Socialist party. Sardar tried to dissuade him but without avail. Ultimately he carried out his resolve, but after a brief separation returned to the fold and became Chief Minister, then Governor of Punjab and finally Governor of Andhra Pradesh. It was in the last capacity that I met him last. He recognised me at once and we recalled the old days. He told me that he was sorry he had not listened to Sardar. By that time, I had earned one more qualification in his eyes; I had helped the Governor of Kerala, Ramakrishna Rao to take over the State from the Council of Ministers (headed by Shri Namboodiripad), which had been dismissed by the Governor and President's rule had been enforced.

At Trivandrum I had the unique experience of paying a visit to the shrine of the ruling family of Travancore, the temple of Lord Shri Padmanabha. Sardar observed the religious obligations strictly, putting on no stitched garment and covering himself with his *chadar*. I followed suit. We also visited the Kovalum beach which at that time had the Ruler's Guest House. We spent some time on the beach and I remember Sardar commenting on the beauty of the scenery, and the peculiar shade of sea water. In fact, I waded quite a distance into the sea. From Trivandrum we went by car to Kanya Kumari. That trip has carved a permanent niche in my memory. Throughout, the towns and villages were lined with vast numbers of humanity clad in spotless white. The cleanliness of the villages and the orderly behaviour of the crowd drew appreciative comments from Sardar. At Kanya Kumari, we saw the beautiful sunset in the evening, and rose early to the magnificent sunrise the next morning. A long streak of the sun's rays reflected in the waters of the Bay of Bengal, appeared to stretch right upto our Guest House window. These two sights by themselves were ample reward for a trip thousands of miles away from Delhi, but the visit to the

Temple of the Virgin Goddess and the sight of the Vivekanand Rock with its religious and historic associations were a fitting climax to our stay. The temple had its own rules and regulations for its rituals, and we observed them to the letter. As we were coming out of the temple, I recited to Sardar the story related by Sheikh Saadi about the temple. According to his account, the idol had a nose-ring with a big diamond so brilliant and luminous that when the moon's rays reflected on it, it emitted a light which gave the impression to the boatmen coming back to the shore that it was a lighthouse The results were disastrous for the boatmen, in trying to avoid the supposed lighthouse they hit the nearby rocks and suffered wrecks.

After the temple visit was over, Sardar was told of a sacred place nearby where the waters of the Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean were believed to meet; it constituted the point of the promontory. Sardar decided to bathe in the sacred waters but I, who dreaded the idea of a bath in the open, kept away. Sardar noticed my absence and sent for me. I had no alternative but to obey and took my bath at the appointed place As we came out, Sardar was thoughtful and kept his eyes closed. Finding me in a somewhat lighthearted mood he turned to me and asked 'Do you realise where you are ?' I said, 'Yes, at Kanya Kumari.' He then remarked 'You are at the feet of Mother India; close your eyes for some minutes and contemplate what lies beyond upto the Himalayas and how all that has been woven into one great and extensive fabric.'

I did what he said and concentrated on the landscape beyond; it was a thrilling and ennobling experience. In my mind's eye were reflected the immediate north with its rich rice fields, its hills the green downs of the Nilgiris, and the time-worn temples of Tiruchirapalli and Madurai; further up came the rich and fertile plains and picturesque hills of Mysore where I had begun my service seventeen years earlier. Here were the matchless Gersoppa and Jog Falls, described by Lord Curzon as one of the finest natural sights of the world and the world-famous Cauvery Falls of the Brindavan Gardens. Then came the stretch of black cotton tracts and undulating plains and deltas spreading from Bombay to Madras via Aurangabad and Hyderabad. At Aurangabad were the peerless caves of Ajanta with their inimitable frescoes defying time, and the matchless sculptures and rock-temple of Ellora. Then intervened the Vindhyas and the Satpuras and the Tapti and Narbada, the latter ranking in sanctity only next to the Ganges. I recalled the association of the region with the Ramayana and Rishi Agasthya. Then I contemplated the Gangetic plains, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa and the region of Madhya Bharat and Madhya Pradesh—all in a wide sweep of the mental eye. I recalled the famous lines of Iqbal 'In the laps of which (India) play thousands of rivers, due to which our garden is the envy of the Garden of Eden' and his address to the Ganges 'O River Ganges, doest thou remember the day when our caravan landed on thy banks.' Finally my eyes rested on the Himalayas overlooking the Brahmaputra Valley—Assam and the Hills—on one side and the Terai of my own Province U.P. on the other, again recalling Iqbal's verse in the same

composition 'We have a mountain, the highest in the World, the neighbour of the Skies; it is our sentry and it is our protector.' In a trice I realised that the maker of recent history who had brought this wide, extensive and diverse territory under one umbrella was with us in this hour of calm contemplation worshipping at the feet of the Mother and sharing with us the spiritual satisfaction of having served the Mother as none in history had done after Ashoka the Great.

It took both of us some time to find our feet again on the *terra-firma* so lost were we in contemplation. In the few minutes of bliss that seemed eternal we had surveyed India in its historic and geographical aspects. We felt spiritually exalted and as we returned to the Guest House the joy of that experience was still in our minds. However, we made our preparations to leave and were back in Trivandrum and later on our ship. We then turned our course back to Bombay and reached there on 18 May 1950.

During this trip I had a unique experience. At Cochin everyone thought I belonged to the place. This was because my name was a common one in that area and I had the distinction of sharing it with the famous cartoonist, my good friend of sterling virtues, Shankar Pillai. At that time, a local leader and subsequently its Chief Minister was R. Shankar who appeared with me for the I.C.S. but failed and despite his failure got congratulatory messages because some mistook my success for his. An enterprising newspaper came out with the story that I came from a village in Cochin and gave some interesting details of my supposed life. However this was not the first instance of such confusion. Earlier once an ambassador had rung me up and without giving me a chance to intervene effectively regaled me with compliments which were intended for my cartoonist namesake. When I did succeed in clearing up the misunderstanding I could hear a gasp on the other side of the line followed by profuse apologies. I said I was sorry that I had been the unwitting cause of waste of his time. On another occasion, during Sardar's visit to Jamnagar, the Jamsahib's eldest brother Pratap Singh had been detailed to look after me. We had practically a whole day's outing, visiting Sikka, Kandla and Balchadi, a seaside resort belonging to H.H. When the trip was over, Pratap Singh turned to me and said 'Mr. Shankar, I have one complaint to make; I do not get your Weekly in time.' Not intending to be hard on him by disillusioning him I replied that on my return to Delhi I would see to it that he got it in time, thinking that I would speak to Shankar Pillai and have matters put right. However, at the banquet the same evening he happened to mention me to Jamsahib. Jamsahib told him off 'Don't be a fool; he is not that Shankar.' Pratap Singh came to me crestfallen but I set his mind at ease by telling him that he need not worry; on my return to Delhi I would speak to Shankar—the cartoonist and have his grievance removed.

Twenty One

Reshuffle of the Cabinet and Economic Policy

THE DAY we returned to Bombay, there was a crisis in the textile industry due to a rumour about devaluation. Soon after we reached Birla House, Ghanshyamdas Birla mentioned it to Sardar and suggested that he might issue a statement on the subject. Sardar agreed and sent for me to draft one. As soon as I found Sardar alone I suggested that he might obtain a second opinion as I knew from my previous experience that the textile industry was not a homogeneous organisation and there might be two or more opinions on this issue. After thinking it over, he agreed and asked me to send for Purshottamdas Thakurdas. After discussion with him, Sardar asked me to draft a short statement which I did and after Sardar showed it to both Purshottamdas Thakurdar and Ghanshyamdas Birla it was issued. It steadied both the stock exchange and the situation in the textile industry.

I have mentioned earlier about the formation of the Cabinet on 6 May 1950. The team was finally settled after a tripartite discussion between the Prime Minister, Sardar and Rajagopalachari. In the first flush of excitement, names of Jairamdas Daulatram, A.P. Jain and T.T. Krishnamachari were mentioned. Sardar persuaded Pandit Nehru to drop T.T. Krishnamachari for the time being as there were two Ayyangars in the Government, namely Gopalaswamy Ayyangar and K. Santhanam and a third one of the same class would invite criticism. Besides, said Sardar, 'T.T. is a brilliant man but you never know when he is sound.' Sardar liked Jain and there was no difficulty about including him while Jairamdas Daulatram staked his claim on the ground that he had rendered services to the Congress. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai's name came up; both Sardar and Rajaji wanted him out on various grounds, the latest being his collection of donations for the National Herald from the Calcutta Ranas who were given the Night Mail Contract. But that was unavailing. Pandit Nehru wanted to bring in the Cabinet his sister Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit but Sardar advised against it on the ground that brother and sister would be in the same Cabinet and that she was cut out for a diplomatic position and we might need her for the United Nations. K.M. Munshi and Sri Prakasha entered the Cabinet. For Finance, Pandit Nehru thought of Govind Ballabh Pant but the latter was unwilling and as usual utilised Sardar to say 'no' to Pandit Nehru. Rajaji was the next to be thought of but he declined. Accordingly, the problem of a successor to

Mathai remained. Sardar stayed on in Bombay for a few days. During this stay he received a letter from Pandit Nehru saying that he had thought over the question of a successor to John Mathai in consultation with Rajagopalachari and in their view the best course would be for Gopalaswami Ayyangar to be given the Finance Portfolio. Sardar thought over the proposal and decided to write to Pandit Nehru differing from him and Rajagopalachari since he thought that whosoever succeeded John Mathai should be well versed in financial matters and should be one who would create confidence in financial, commercial and industrial circles. He felt that Gopalaswami would not fit the requirements and suggested the name of Chintamani Deshmukh, who had been appointed a member of the Planning Commission or G L. Mehta who was also a member of the Planning Commission and had experience of the Tariff Board and was an industrialist. He wrote to Pandit Nehru accordingly. The Prime Minister wrote back to say that he had consulted Deshmukh but the latter had shown his reluctance on political grounds as he would not be able to carry any weight with the Ruling Party; he did not think that G.L. Mehta would be better than Gopalaswami and reiterated his choice in favour of the latter. Sardar still resisted the proposal and insisted on C.D. Deshmukh; he told Pandit Nehru to convey to him that he, Sardar would stand by him and he need not be apprehensive about support in the Party. Pandit Nehru conveyed this to C.D. Deshmukh and the latter finally agreed to take over the Finance Portfolio. Sardar was very relieved to get this news; he had full confidence in Chintaman Deshmukh's talents with his experience of the Governorship of the Reserve Bank and previous connection with the Finance Department; he was also confident that the choice would be welcomed by financial and commercial circles among whom Deshmukh was well-known.

Sardar returned to Delhi after about a fortnight's absence. Although he felt much better he was not yet back to normal. He, however, plunged into discussions about various problems in view of the impending departure of Pandit Nehru to Indonesia.

After the discussions were over, Sardar raised with Pandit Nehru the question of the next Congress President as the period of Pattabhi Sittaramayya's tenure was coming to an end. He was keen to avoid a repetition of the last election in which the two had different candidates in view, and one of them indirectly got the P.M.'s support in public. Pandit Nehru agreed with Sardar's approach and said that he would come to Dehra Dun on his return from Indonesia and discuss with him this important matter. Sardar then moved to Dehra Dun. We stayed in the Circuit House as usual and life followed its routine. We had the same companions, Tyagi, Bikram Sondhi and Khursheed Lal.

During Pandit Nehru's absence, one very difficult problem, the direct consequence of Partition came up in a very urgent form. With the loss of East Bengal, our jute mills were denied their supply of raw jute and similarly the textile industry lost the supply of cotton grown in the canal areas of West Pakistan. India was also faced with a shortage of sugar. Sardar was

already seized of the question and had held discussions with the Ministers and Secretaries concerned. Their proposals which were aimed at self-sufficiency over a period of years, met with heavy weather from the Finance Department and the newly set up Planning Commission. Curiously, Gulzari Lal Nanda who was a source of some difficulty in the Bombay Cabinet and who had now become a member of the Planning Commission was a strong critic; Sardar to whom Nanda owed his rise in the labour movement and his political career, was hurt about this attitude and wrote a strong letter in Gujarati. Nanda then had to make amends Time was running out and it became necessary to take urgent decisions if we were not to lose the next season. Consequently, Sardar called a meeting of the Cabinet and Members of the Planning Commission at Dehra Dun -the first and probably the last time when the Cabinet ever met outside Delhi. They all came to Dehra Dun and for that town it became a gala occasion. Sardar held the meeting and got a programme of self-sufficiency in jute, cotton and sugar approved by the Cabinet. The programme was spearheaded by that livewire, Datar Singh, a competent officer with rare drive, who was Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture. After the decision was taken he called Datar Singh and told him that it was now his responsibility to deliver the goods. Datar Singh undertook to take charge of the programme and it must be said to his credit and to the credit of the States concerned, that the programme was implemented with commendable zeal and vigour and the following three years showed phenomenal results in the increase in the yield of these three commodities. This meant a drastic reduction in the imports from Pakistan and a better deal to the mills in prices, for Pakistan was making them pay heavily, particularly for jute that was to a large extent being smuggled across the river into West Bengal. The import of jute into West Bengal soon became a trickle as compared to the substantial quantities imported in the past and that small amount was pushed out by needy cultivators to whom export to India was easier than sale in East Pakistan. Thus, the prosperity which the cultivators of these crops in India gradually achieved and the assurance of supplies which the Indian mills secured, were mainly due to the bold measures adopted at that Cabinet meeting in Dehra Dun.

I might explain that earlier in the year the Planning Commission had been brought into being to take the country forward towards a planned economy. Planning had been a feature of the Congress policy ever since it was first mooted in Lucknow and a National Planning Committee was set up of which Pandit Nehru was the Chairman and Gulzari Lal Nanda the Secretary. Some spade work had been done; while it promoted a great deal of thinking it lacked authority and comprehensiveness. However, during the late stages of the war, a Planning Department had been created with Sir Ardeshir Dalal as Member and General Hulton as Secretary; Sir Ardeshir's selection was due to his co-authorship of the famous Bombay Plan which constituted the first major attempt to draw up an outline of a development plan for the country. Among others who were associated with it were, as far as I remember, Mr. J.R.D. Tata, Sir Purshottam Das Thakhurdas, and Shri G.D.

Birla. Since Independence, Government had been busy grappling with so many problems connected with Partition, security, law and order, integration and Constitution-making; in spite of all this, they had found time to devote themselves to economic problems; the spirit of development was on. Many welfare measures such as agrarian reforms had been taken in hand; impetus had been given to development activities in agriculture and industry, health and other social services, and systematic attempts had been made to put the country on its feet and its economy in shape. Sardar's speeches give a clue as to how his mind was working in regard to improving the country's economy. An Industrial Policy Resolution had been announced, which laid down a broad division of public and private sectors and also prescribed guidelines for regulation of industrial development in the country. Similarly, a policy had been formulated for the attraction of foreign capital in the prescribed fields and the conditions subject to which its interests would be ensured. These were certainly adequate foundations for the future structure but that structure had yet to be planned and shaped in a systematic way over the entire field of national welfare. The Planning Commission was constituted to help the Government in doing so.

It is not the concept of Planning which gave rise to controversy but the definition of its exact role. The trouble was that in its initial approach it showed signs of constituting itself into a parallel Government—a super agency to lay down economic policies and supervise their implementation—and as such it encroached on Government departments, particularly the Ministry of Finance. That brought forth protests from the Finance Minister who, as we have seen, submitted his resignation but later withdrew it. Eventually, he had to pay the price for this spirit of dissent and had to quit. But the suspicions of the Commission still remained not only in the minds of the Central Ministers but also in those of State Chief Ministers and their colleagues in the States. It was, therefore, decided to convene a meeting of the Chief Ministers in Delhi, and Sardar was assigned the task of making them agree. He accordingly addressed them on 26 April 1950 and finally secured their cooperation.

After explaining the paramount need of 'cutting our coat according to our cloth and the involvements which had to be got out of the way as a condition precedent to systematic planning' he gave to the Chief Ministers his views on the main problem of those days, namely heavy import of food. He said:

> My own view which I have not concealed and which I have expressed often to the displeasure of many is that if we had not played false to ourselves and to our country, large imports of food would have been unnecessary.
>
> We have plenty of food in this country. Five or ten per cent of deficit in a huge country like this is not difficult to make up by increased production, by prevention of waste, by putting in maximum efforts to economise and also by applying our hearts unitedly in the matter of giving up

foodstuffs where they are surplus.

There are some provinces which are surplus and others are deficit. Whenever a province tries to procure the surplus food from the people, we do not speak with one voice. Some of us put our province first and the rest of the country afterwards. We know that our neighbours are in spite of their best efforts, not getting enough to eat and yet we feel that if we feed our province the rest does not matter

Commenting on our weakness in this field he said:

We have not felt as a nation, and the governing organisation does not speak with one voice. Planning cannot mend this difficulty. The Chief Ministers of States and Presidents of Congress organisations can, to a certain extent, mend this matter.

Considerable planning is required to make the Presidents and Chief Ministers meet. They are proceeding in contrary directions. In the Congress organisation itself, whenever the Government wants to push any scheme, another group desires to demolish it.

Planning, however good, will not work till we realize our responsibility and till we feel that it is our obligation to help in the implementation of a scheme that has been planned. It is not the Congress organisation alone, but there are other groups whose business it is to destroy everything that we do. Their main function is to find fault with everything we do, however, good it may be.

There are some groups who are bent on creating disruption and dislocation and go to the length of creating chaos, committing murders and dacoities, removing rails and tampering with communications.

These are matters of great concern. On that account considerable amount of strain has been placed on the Government. In spite of all that, we have, to a large extent, restored order and this has been appreciated by the people who came from outside.

Giving his ideas on Planning he observed:

Machinery will not solve the problem because millions of idle hands who have no work cannot find employment on machines. India's planning must necessarily differ from the planning of highly developed and industrialised countries. India is primarily an agricultural country and in a country as thickly populated as India is, idleness is the greatest disease. Gandhiji's planning was, therefore, of a different kind and it was difficult.

But it is difficult to plan on a non-industrial basis also. We must industrialize our country quickly and efficiently in certain directions. Otherwise we are doomed in the modern world because a modern army requires many things which only machines can produce, apart from arms and ammunition, uniforms and stores, jeeps and motor cars, aeroplanes and petrol. If industry is not developed in the country, we have to depend on external sources.

The speech to my mind constitutes a complete refutation to those who thought that Sardar was opposed to planning. What he felt, however, was that there should be a clear demarcation of its role so that it would not usurp the functions of Government and that planning should be realistic in terms of resources and capability. The subsequent history of the Commission until its disbandment in 1971 and its reconstitution under a new Charter, underline that need and confirm the position taken up both by John Mathai and Sardar on this specific aspect of the relationship between the Commission and Government. The Report of the Administrative Reforms Commission also emphasise this aspect and highlights the need of preserving its expert and advisory character.

Sardar's stay at Dehra Dun was otherwise uneventful except that this time it was not as beneficial as it used to be in the earlier years. Organisational matter left undecided were troubling his mind; somehos whc had forebodings of a critical time ahead. The state of his health was not as satisfactory as it should have been and my mind was filled with apprehension as I surveyed the problems that awaited him in Delhi on his return.

Apart from the question of a Congress President, the situation in Nepal was causing him anxiety. From Indian soil, a revolt had been organised against the Rana regime, mainly under the leadership of Mahabir Shamshere Rana and Subarna Shamsher Rana of Calcutta. King Tribhuwan, who was out of favour with the Ranas, fled the country and came to India; as soon as he came here he became a focus of intrigues in the Capital. The Prime Minister of Nepal, General Joodha Shamshere Jung, had to leave but Kaiser Shamshere Jung and Bijay Shamshere Jung were active in seeking a reconciliation and paid visits to India where they were represented by their Ambassador, a relation of Bijay. They met Sardar who found them in a conciliatory mood. Sardar realised that the Ranas could not be altogether discarded but could be moulded by means of the progressive elements among them. He found Kaiser and Bijay answering this purpose and tried to convince Pandit Nehru accordingly. But Pandit Nehru was receiving other reports. Sardar had reports that small arms had been imported under Kidwai's inspiration from Burma and he informed Pandit Nehru accordingly, but to no avail. In his discussions with the Prime Minister Sardar tried to plead with him that any movement from outside would only have a shortlived success; that unless a strong democratic base could be built up within, Nepal would be the sufferer; that toppling the Rana Regime without there being anything substantial within the country to take its place would expose the country to confusion and uncertainty; that Ranas in exile were no different from Ranas within and in fact the latter had a stake in the country whereas the former had little or none; that it would be best to utilise the better elements among the Ranas along with such popular representatives as were available in Nepal to provide a structure for controlled democracy in which the King should play a formative role; and that on that basis a rapprochement should be arranged between the King and the Ranas.

But the advice failed to carry weight. Pandit Nehru thought that democracy

was on the march in Nepal with the help of imported bayonets and that the organisation which was creating trouble was a liberation force. Sardar warned him that democracy would not survive for long and that we would only succeed in alienating Nepal who was our traditional friend and neighbour and whose friendship we would need in our own interests. But instead of the long term view which Sardar projected, the short term view prevailed, and the glamour and glory of the liberator ruled the mind and heart. The results of intervention from India at the time and subsequent support to the trouble-making elements are writ large on the history of our relationship with Nepal, particularly after the death of King Tribhuvan who, at the best of times and in his few sober moments, was hardly the type who could lead the people of his State.

Nepal has undoubtedly had its reactions on States like Sikkim and Bhutan. We have had difficulties with Sikkim. In Bhutan it is the wisdom and far-sightedness and friendly attitude of the King which has prevented it from harbouring the same pro-Chinese outlook as Nepal has had to the grave prejudice of our own interests in that Kingdom. King Mahendra whose astuteness and attitudes governed the country and its relations with Indea is the product of those times. Rightly handled he would have fully answered the role that Sardar envisaged for the king. As a sincere guardian of Nepal's interests that he had largely proved to be he would have been a genuine friend of India as well.

After his return from Indonesia Pandit Nehru came to Dehra Dun. After the multifarious problems of Government had been discussed, Sardar raised the question of Congress Presidentship. They discussed various names. Pandit Nehru ruled out Acharya Kripalani and Sardar fully endorsed his view. Pandit Nehru suggested Shankar Rao Deo but Sardar pointed out that he was intensely regional in his outlook and lacked an All India perspective. This brought up the name of Purshottam Das Tandon. Pandit Nehru expressed his strong opposition to him on the ground of his identification with Hindu communal interests, his odd ways, his rigidity and his fanatical attitude on the language question which would alienate the south. Sardar pointed out the close fight he gave to Pattabhi Sitaramayya, despite propaganda that the latter was being supported by Pandit Nehru and the ovation he got from the delegates at Jaipur, after a stalwart like Pantji had to sit down within only a few minutes of commencing his speech. But Panditji was unmoved. They then decided to consider someone who was not a controversial figure. H.C. Mukerji who was Vice-President of the Constituent Assembly was discussed. Panditji thought and rightly too that he would not be popular among the delegates. The discussions were thus inconclusive and they agreed to discuss the matter again after Sardar's return to the capital. As he was leaving, G.D. Birla who had come from Mussoorie asked Panditji if he had exhausted all the subjects he had come to discuss with Sardar. Pandit Nehru replied 'Yes, a number of them but as you know many problems solve themselves.'

During Pandit Nehru's absence another crisis had cropped up. John Mathai

on his leaving the Cabinet was proceeding to Srinagar for a holiday. Only his departmental officers came to see him off. Sardar wanted to go to the airport to bid him farewell but we were held up. In the meantime, John Mathai and Mrs. Mathai had boarded the aircraft and the plane began to taxi off. Just then we reached the airport, and the plane was instructed to stop; the ladder was put up again and Sardar then went in and greeted both of them. Mathai was greatly touched by this gesture. While at Srinagar and when Pandit Nehru was away in Indonesia, Mathai issued a statement, on his quitting the Government, which was highly critical of the Prime Minister. Maulana Azad issued a rejoinder which contained some mis-statements. The Public Relations Officer brought them to Sardar's notice and Sardar then wrote to Maulana that both courtesy and formality demanded that he should have referred the matter to him and if necessary he would have issued the rejoinder; in any case he felt that the inaccuracies should be corrected. Pandit Nehru, not knowing that Maulana Azad had already rushed into print, sent a telegram to Sardar to issue a rejoinder; thereupon Sardar wrote to Pandit Nehru a long letter explaining the position. The Maulana however exploited the incident to put it accross to Pandit Nehru that Sardar did not react to the statement as he should have done and instead found fault with him.

During his stay in Dehra Dun a number of important personalities from U.P. came and the general impression conveyed was that after Sardar's visit to Lucknow in January, U.P. politics had taken on a placid aspect and that the usual wrangles which used to mar that placidity had subsided. There were so many topics discussed at these informal meetings including an attempt on the part of a prominent U.P. politician in the dissenter's camp to commit suicide over an affair with a girl. But the main topic with U.P. politicians was that of Purshottam Das Tandon's candidature on which they were fanatically bent. During one of these talks, C. B. Gupta told Sardar that Acharya Kripalani had told him that if Tandon stood for the election he would not contest it. During these informal discussions, however, Sardar sometimes used to be in a reminiscent mood. I remember he once gave an account to Tyagi of the happenings in the Ahmednagar camp. He told him how Pandit Nehru, Maulana Azad, Asaf Ali and Syed Mahmud used to be critical of Gandhiji. He mentioned that when Asaf Ali raised the question of a rapprochement with Government, Sardar retorted 'If you go anywhere near the British, you will have to divorce your wife.' He also described how Pandit Nehru and Syed Mahmud were sharing a room and Nehru found the latter busy writing something. Sardar suspected something amiss and mentioned his suspicions to Pandit Nehru but the latter would not listen. This went on for one and a half months and when the order for release of Syed Mahmud came he explained it away on grounds of health. But Sardar was not convinced. The truth came out when Syed Mahmud met Gandhiji after his release and his correspondence with the Viceroy was published. However, Syed Mahmud was in the long run none the worse for this act of 'betrayal'.

Sardar returned from Dehra Dun in the second week of July. After his return to Delhi he met Pandit Nehru for brief sessions but the latter did not

discuss the question of Congress Presidentship. Once the subject was mentioned, only to be put off.

In the meantime, Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad met Sardar and both had a frank discussion about Kashmir and Sheikh Abdullah. Sardar spoke with so much feeling and in so much detail that Bakhshi realised the depth of what he said. He said to him, 'Why do you not take over the problem and finish it like Hyderabad?' He said Sheikh Abdulla had felt the same way and wanted to come but had a complaint of high blood pressure. He would bring him the next time. Both of them came again but after several months when Sardar, as will be narrated later, intervened at the right moment to stave off a near disaster. It was then that they both repeated what Bakhshi Saheb had earlier said. Sardar's reply was laconic, 'you go to your friend and tell him to keep his hands off the Kashmir problem for two months and I will undertake to solve it.'

All along, Rajagopalachari without any portfolio, and with no prospect of getting the External Affairs portfolio, was busy seeing Pandit Nehru and Sardar and keeping both informed of each other's reactions. He gave Sardar some indication of the working of Pandit Nehru's mind. It seemed that Nehru was irrevocably opposed to Tandon and wanted to support Shankar Rao Deo but conceded the weak points which Sardar had mentioned. Rajagopalachari suggested that Sardar should become the Congress President and mentioned it to Pandit Nehru to which he reacted coldly. Maulana Azad met Sardar and suggested S. K. Patil. Sardar asked him to sound Pandit Nehru; it was summarily turned down.

Suddenly, towards the end of July Sardar received an intimation that an informal meeting of the members of the Working Committee present in Delhi was being convened to consider the matter and Sardar's presence was requested. Sardar refused to attend the meeting. He held the view that the matter was in the first place to be sorted out between Pandit Nehru and himself as was agreed to, and then only would the question of consultation with others and observance of formalities arise. In any case, Sardar felt that consultation with only those who accidentally happened to be in Delhi was not the proper way of dealing with the matter. Sardar was also not in good health and his outdoor movements were not as free as before.

Notwithstanding Sardar's refusal to attend the meeting, it was held and it transpired that Pandit Nehru at first tried to sponsor Shankar Rao Deo but the proposal met with no support and thereafter it was decided that Acharya Kripalani should be nominated. When Sardar received the news he was greatly hurt and angry. He was taken aback at the way Pandit Nehru went back on what was agreed to at Dehra Dun; still more, he was baffled at the Prime Minister's resuscitation of Acharya Kripalani who had earlier resigned the Congress Presidentship on account of differences between himself and Pandit Nehru and whose candidature was similarly ruled out by him at Dehra Dun at the mere mention of his name. Moreover, he saw in all these manoeuvres the hand of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and felt that his acquiescence to the proposal would be injurious to the interests of the Congress. Rajaji's

discussions with Pandit Nehru and Maulana Azad confirmed that Rafi Ahmed was at the back of it. It was Rafi Ahmed Kidwai who made Tandon's candidature a point of honour and egged Pandit Nehru on to oppose it and finally secured his assent, albeit reluctantly, to the proposal to nominate Acharya Kripalani. Faced with this *volta face* on the Prime Minister's part, Sardar resolutely decided to sponsor Tandon. He immediately got in touch with Govind Ballabh Pant and Chandra Bhan Gupta and asked them to have Tandon proposed. There was another unfortunate, and to my mind tragic result of these developments and that was the distance that they caused between Sardar and Pandit Nehru. Sardar was unwell and generally in bed with the result that he seldom could meet Pandit Nehru and even when they met this subject was never raised. It was left to Rajagopalachari to keep up the contact with and between both—hardly a favourable position for any rapprochement. In fact, both hardened in their attitude and intensive canvassing was started by supporters on both sides—Sardar from his sick-bed and Pandit Nehru actively. For the third time in the history of the Congress after Gandhiji's entry into Indian politics, open division of opinion in the election of the Congress President took place. The first time it was at Tripuri but matters then ended in the triumph of Gandhiji and exit of Subhas Bose. The second time was when Pattabhi Sitarammayya was elected but then the conflict was not so open and the organisation was not thrown into the schismatic cauldron. On this occasion the conflict was open and the rift had certainly widened.

Sardar exercised his influences on the course of elections from his sick-bed and through telephone calls apart from the personal interviews he gave to leading personalities. His main supporters were Govind Ballabh Pant and Chandra Bhan Gupta in U. P., Jai Narayan Vyas and his colleagues in Rajasthan, Ravi Shankar Shukla and D.P. Mishra in Madhya Pradesh, S.K. Patil in Bombay and B.S. Hiray in Maharashtra, Satya Narayan Sinha in the All-India sphere in general and Bihar in particular where Shri Krishna Sinha lent a helping hand, Jagjivan Ram in Bihar, Dr. B.C. Roy in Bengal, Kala Venkat Rao in Andhra Pradesh, K.C. Reddy in Mysore, Narayan Pillai in Kerala, Gopichand Bhargava and Pratap Singh Kairon in Punjab—altogether a formidable list. As regards the other camp, Pandit Nehru was quite active himself but the spearhead of the campaign was Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, and his main strength was in the south. It was reckoned that Maharashtra votes would go to Shankar Rao Deo who was standing all the same. It was inevitable that in every Pradesh Congress opinion should be divided; in some it was evenly matched.

During the election period some correspondence took place between Sardar and Pandit Nehru both about the manner in which the election was being organised and the circumstances which had unfortunately developed. Moreover, Rajagopalachari was seeing both Sardar and Pandit Nehru and apprising them of each other's point of view. Thus both the prime antagonists were keeping at a distance from each other while Rajaji was an effective go-between. In one of Pandit Nehru's letters somewhat nearer the day of

election, Pandit Nehru hinted that it would be impossible for him to carry on as Prime Minister if Tandon were elected. This was enforced by Rajagopalachari who told Sardar that he was convinced that Pandit Nehru would resign if Tandon was elected. By this time it was becoming clear that Tandon had an edge over his rival and Rajagopalachari wanted Sardar to heal his differences with the Prime Minister but the Rubicon had been crossed and any intervention to bring the two nearer was bound to fail. So far as Sardar was concerned he had been hurt too deeply to persuade himself to forget the past The die was thus cast and the election was held; it resulted in the success of Tandon and defeat of Acharya Kripalani. The result was declared late in the evening of a day in the last week of August. The next morning Rajagopalachari came to see Sardar. Sardar asked him jokingly, 'Have you brought Jawaharlal's resignation?' Rajaji confessed that that was not the case and there was no talk of resignation. Sardar more or less had the did-I-not-tell-you-so attitude regarding the events.

While these developments were taking place in the organisational field, affairs of State were commanding attention relentlessly. Kashmir had already become a thorn in the side. Sheikh who was still smarting under his discomfiture over Article 370, was on the war-path. One day he bluntly told V. Sahay, Secretary, Kashmir Affairs that the Government of India was concerned with only three subjects and no more. Another day he addressed a Press Conference in which he attacked Sardar. I have a feeling that Sheikh Saheb's umbrage at the fate of his brother-in-law Colonel Nedou, who was on the staff of H.H. the Maharaja of Indore, had embittered him. Colonel Nedou's conduct in the entourage of His Highness was adversely commented upon in the reports we confidentially received from more than one source. Sardar and Menon went into the matter carefully and came to the conclusion that Colonel Nedou must be removed from the scene; otherwise there was risk of loss of substantial amount of jewellery. Colonel Nedou was reported to have wormed his way into the Maharaja's favour through his American wife and to be exercising an undesirable influence over him. When the Sheikh came to know of this, he staked his reputation on the outcome and is reported to have told Panditji that he would resign if Nedou were removed. Panditji took up the matter with Sardar in view of the delicate position of the Kashmir problem and Sheikh's indispensability. But Sardar was adamant and refused to yield. He told Panditji that they could easily find a substitute for him. Sheikh continued to indulge in threats and temper tantrums but without avail and Colonel Nedou had to go.

Regarding the Press Conference there was an angry exchange of correspondence between Sheikh and Sardar. In the field of Foreign Affairs the situation in Korea was looming large. There were divided counsels on that question both in India and abroad in London, New York, Washington and Peking. Sardar summed up the difficulties 'We have a bounder in China, a quarrelsome man in London, a conceited lady in America and a theorist

in U.N.* During this time Loy Henderson, the American Ambassador asked for a private meeting with Sardar. In that meeting, Sardar explained the workings of Pandit Nehru's mind and on the whole, I think Henderson was able to appreciate the Prime Minister's attitude much better after Sardar's explanation.

Twenty-two

The Aftermath of the Presidential Election

THE ELEVATION of Tandon to the Congress *gaddi* marks a definite watershed in the relations between Sardar and Pandit Nehru. As was to be expected, the latter felt very bitter at his discomfiture and though he did not carry out his intention, as expressed to Rajaji, to resign from the office of Prime Minister, it is clear that he decided to give no peace to Sardar for the rest of the time that was vouchsafed to him on earth. It is likely that he was not fully aware of the true state of Sardar's health. At least, to my knowledge, he never enquired about it, though to those who were near Sardar it was clear that his mission in life was ruthlessly and lamentably coming to a close. The lamp which had burned with a steady flame was now flickering for want of strength and sustenance. The truth of the matter was that since the setback in February 1950, Sardar had been unable to enjoy the rest and peace of mind which might have made some difference to his flagging energy. Instead, he had passed through an acute phase of mental anxiety and distress during the East Bengal refugee crisis in March and his visit to Calcutta, though successful beyond expectations, had eaten substantially into his reserves. The sea voyage which followed proved to be a palliative and not a restorative. The visit to Dehra Dun in June was a bit of a tonic but July and August with their mental anguish, disillusionment and a feeling of having been let down had sapped his energies further. Sardar in September was virtually a sick man but being too committed to the immediate future in view of the developments in the immediate past, he was unable to minister adequately to his health. He was devoting himself constantly and assiduously to the health of the organisation, to the building up of which he had made such a formative and important contribution and which after well nigh twelve years had got into a crisis of unprecedented magnitude. He was also deeply concerned with the affairs of the country, the present face of which was largely his own handiwork.

Those of us who were close to him were filled with apprehension and anxiety; yet we could not, by overemphasising the need of caution and conservation in matters of health, add to his distress and mental disturbance. He knew that only he could deal with the aftermath of the election; he knew how much Pandit Nehru had taken to heart Tandon's success. Tandon himself was disillusioned because he was over-optimistic about being able to win round Pandit Nehru for whom he claimed to have affection and respect. He felt quite helpless and at a loss to deal with the situation. That put an

additional strain on Sardar. Pandit Nehru far from accommodating himself to Tandon's success as Sardar had done in the case of Pattabhi Sitaramayya's election, made no secret of his strong disapproval, mixed with threats of non-cooperation. Tandon found this to his cost at his very first meeting with Pandit Nehru after he was elected president. The Prime Minister was firmly resolved to retrieve the situation first by creating difficulties over the constitution of the Working Committee and then during the ensuing Congress session in November at Nasik. For the time being, the immediate issues were the formation of the Working Committee and then of the Presidential address at the Nasik session. The latter took precedence over the former. But these were big issues worthy of the big personalities that were engaged in the internal struggle. However, smaller issues provided opportunities for pinpricks which Pandit Nehru was not prepared to let pass.

Two of these issues were thrown up by valued members of the Congress itself and in a way they were the offshoots of the elections. One was the case, which had been going on for some time, against Jai Narayan Vyas, Mathura Das Mathur and Dwarka Das Purohit in respect of some irregularities alleged to have been committed during the time they were Chief Ministers and Ministers respectively in the Jodhpur Ministry, prior to the integration of Rajasthan. The allegations had been investigated by the S.P.E., who had found a prima facie case and launched a prosecution with the approval of the Central Government. The case had created a sensation in Rajasthan Congress circles The hearings were going on but it was not proceeding on the optimistic lines which the prosecution agencies thought it would follow. The general impression was that the case would not succeed. Sardar had expressed his doubts to some of the Rajasthan Congress leaders and this was construed as a deal between him and Jai Narayan Vyas for the latter's support to Tandon. Jai Narayan Vyas was an old hand of States Subjects People Organisation and as such close to Pandit Nehru; he was also reported to be a friend of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. His support to Tandon caused some surprise and Pandit Nehru and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai attributed it to a promise made by Sardar that the case would be withdrawn after the election.

The other was a case filed against Sardar Narmada Prasad Singh of Rewa, at one time Revenue Minister in Vindhya Pradesh, who had been a friend of Pandit Nehru of long standing but who had a certain reputation which was not altogether complimentary to him. I must say, however, that he was an admirer of Sardar and since I came from a neighbouring area (he used to live mostly in Allahabad thirty seven miles from my native place) he and I were quite good friends. In his case also the allegations were made, the S.P.E. enquired into it and a prosecution was launched. Pandit Nehru felt that Sardar Narmada Prasad Singh was innocent and a victim of political prosecution because he was in his camp.

On both these issues he wrote long letters to Sardar, containing insinuations which were distasteful to Sardar. Sardar duly replied to Pandit Nehru but when he found him persistent he decided to hand over the papers to

Rajagopalachari who suggested consultation with the Attorney-General, M.C. Setalwad. The latter found that the two cases were not free from an element of doubt and advised their being dropped which was accordingly done. Jai Narain Vyas lived to vindicate completely his innocence for he had a distinguished record of Chief Ministership of Rajasthan to his credit in subsequent years but Narmada Prasad Singh was involved in another case concerning his management of affairs of a commercial undertaking: he chose to abscond from the hand of the law and was subsequently arrested and brought to book. Thus, he belied the faith which Pandit Nehru had in his uprightness, a faith which led Nehru to claim that if he was so bad as he was painted, he would have known it during his long friendship with him stretching for over twenty years

A third source of irritation was none other than myself Pandit Nehru appears to have been told by certain coteries that I was to some extent the villain of the piece, that I wielded an influence over Sardar which was out of proportion to what a civil servant should have and that I was bypassing the normal official channels. He accused me of writing to the Chief Justice of U.P. and getting him to sponsor the candidature of K.N. Wanchoo, an I.C.S. Judge of Allahabad High Court for the Chief Justiceship of Rajasthan to which he was appointed. (He later rose to be a distinguished Judge of the Supreme Court). Obviously there had been leakages of distorted information from the Home Ministry which dealt with the matter. A long letter from Pandit Nehru was received to which Sardar made a spirited and befitting reply, completely refuting the allegations and as far as I remember, saying bluntly that if, after knowing him for nearly thirty years Pandit Nehru felt he could be led by the nose, either he had completely misjudged him all along or he had failed to impress him. As far as I can recollect Pandit Nehru did not return to the charge.

These issues clearly showed which way the wind blew. Pandit Nehru was embittered to the point that he had not been able to set this last issue of difference, serious as it was, against the services which his close and valued colleague, senior in age and definitely at least equal in the hierarchy and length and value of service rendered to the Congress and the country, particularly during the last three years; one who had stood by him through thick and thin, both before and after Partition, who had himself sacrificed two clear chances of elevating himself to his own position when he had offered to quit. Sardar had resisted the attempt of the candidate of his own choice (Acharaya Kripalani) to lay claim to the high office of President of the Congress, a situation which would have adversely affected Panditji's position as Prime Minister, and only five months earlier had responded, cheerfully and unmindfull of his own health, to his own request to retrieve the situation in West Bengal which he himself felt helpless to control. But politics and a blow to personal prestige have a strange way of making men transgress finer rules of human conduct which are generally expected of those occupying high position. As the Gita has observed:

What the wise choose
The unwise people talk: What best men do
The multitude will follow.

We are apt to forget that those in high places are governed by their moods, rivalries, injuries, emotions and pride as are we, men of humbler clay. Seldom in life have I had the truth of this statement better exemplified than during the last few months of Sardar's life on this earth.

So far as the exaggerated notion which Pandit Nehru appears to have been led to believe, about my influence on Sardar is concerned, I would like to give here an account of my method of working. I never imposed my advice on him; I gave it when it was sought except during discussions in which naturally advice, caution, warning, assent and acquiescence figured as appropriate, under a sense of duty or submission. When I discussed the files with him my whole purpose was to save him time, to acquaint him with essential facts and arguments and then leave it to him to give whatever directions he thought fit. If he wanted my advice or any clarification it was upto him to ask for and I complied to the best of my ability. If I was present during any discussions I was keenly attentive and observant in order to grasp the facts, arguments, attitudes and personalities of those involved as well as of those present. I intervened in the discussions generally when asked; but also occasionally on my own in order to drop a hint to Sardar when I thought some different line or consideration should be taken into account. Sardar on his part did not hesitate to differ when dissent was necessary and could be indicated on the spot. When he had any element of doubt, he would either turn towards me quietly to sense my reactions without asking me, or ask me for my views or reserve his own. When he was free, he would discuss his reservations with me and then come to his own decision. Being so close to him, spending practically the whole day and a good part of the evening with him and seeing him at work or at discussion with a keen eye and an attentive ear it was not difficult for me by and large to anticipate the way his mind worked and when others rang me up to ascertain Sardar's probable reaction, I was generally able to forecast it correctly. Apart from all this, in retrospect I feel that there was between us such a similarity of approach and outlook that we found a sympathetic response to each other and instances of divergence were few and far between.

So far as correspondence was concerned, it used to be my endeavour to translate Sardar's ideas into precise terms. Unless he wanted to be blunt, forthright or aggressive I preferred to observe the civil servant's rules of politeness, caution, moderation and sometimes qualification. So far as the last characteristic was concerned, I always borein mind Sardar's injunction which might be summarised as follows:

When you speak you are more free to indulge in forthrightness, directness, attack and sarcasm—all weapons in the armoury of debate which can

be effectively employed without fear of anybody else but the two engaged in discussions getting involved. But when it comes to committing anything to writing do not forget that what you are saying is for record and you may have to justify what you say to others– big or small, a small group or a large gathering, contemporary or future generation. At the same time you have to ensure that others as far as possible do not catch you on the wrong foot. Therefore, you have to be cautious and keep loopholes for escape where necessary so that you can retrace your steps without withdrawing anything that you have already said and without loss of face or prestige.

I need hardly say that I tried my best to follow this injunction then and have done so ever since. I always tried to draft his letters on lines which I thought he himself would have done, and, our minds working mostly in consonence, it was not difficult generally to do so to his entire satisfaction. But he would make an amendation and additions or cancellation as was appropriate. He would scan the drafts quite closely and never signed anything without reading the exceptions being short letters of a formal nature. He allowed me considerable latitude in the choice of language and did not mind a few literary flashes which I added here and there, particularly in the drafts of his speeches and statements such as the one he issued in answer to Churchill on 15 August 1950. Sometimes when I introduced some quotation from Shakespeare, Omar Khayyam or history he would jokingly turn to me and ask me when he had read these and I would retort that I was trying to make up for his deficiency. I found this part of my work very absorbing and it has given me immense delight and I do not think that, but for that period of fruitful labour, I would have been capable of bringing out fully in subsequent years whatever talent of expression I have been able to muster in official and public life.

So far as correspondence with Pandit Nehru was concerned, I was particularly careful. I knew matters on which Sardar felt strongly and the extent to which if at all he was prepared to give in. There I had naturally to be direct and forceful without being offensive and I tried to moderate his letters in the interest of mutual regard, affection and understanding. Generally Sardar's letters in reply to Pandit Nehru used to be shorter than those of the Prime Minister. This was because Pandit Nehru freely wrote what he thought which meant that he tended to be discursive. Sardar on the other hand had his own ideas of economy of words, space and time and there were evident throughout his correspondence. Even when they differed, seldom if ever did the correspondence become acrimonious and that too only during the earlier phase of the post-Independence era and towards the end of Sardar's life. Sardar knew how to restrain himself when restraint was needed but my own influence, whatever it was, was always excercised so as to avoid any confrontation. My task was easy for neither was spoiling for a fight and neither spoken nor written word was conclusive to the point of a conflict; each could be countered by the other and whatever hurt was caused evaporated

soon. The only lasting phase of strain and divergence was the last one which, so far as Pandit Nehru was concerned, even Sardar's approaching end or death could not terminate and which, so far as Sardar was concerned, he took with him when he departed from this world.

I am aware of the fact that many then and a good number even now believe that I had a decisive influence on Sardar's mind. The erroneous impressiom was contemporaneously entertained, to my mind, due to Sardar taking a different view from what was put to him by his official aids. He was able to assess for himself the different personalities and the jealousies that sometimes crept into their attitudes. It may sound strange but it is true that in matters in which Sardar dealt directly with Pandit Nehru or his colleagues or his Secretaries I did not come into the picture and these formed quite a substantial volume of his daily preoccupations. Where he sought my advice or where I had to put up or discuss a case with him, naturally it became incumbent on me to tender my advice as objectively as I could and if it was acceptable to Sardar it was because we seemed to think so much alike or he had some faith in my capacity and judgement, and not because I could influence him irrespective of the merit of the case. People are apt to forget that if there was one politician those days who had a mind of his own it was Sardar and that his mind was so quick and so sharp that it could grasp in a trice what his colleagues could understand only after a great deal of thought. Further, his process of thought was so direct and smooth that it could reduce to simplicity and precision even complicated and involved problems. I have given some instances of the directness and clarity with which he solved intricate problems in a comparatively short time. But for these virtues he would not have been able to accomplish so much in such a short time with such limited assistance and resources at his disposal. We, to whom the honour and privilege came to serve him, felt it our bounden duty to help to conserve his energies for the cause of the country and to save his time for devotion to national interests. None can deny that by our method of work and due to his implicit confidence and trust in us and our dedication to him we largely succeeded in the discharge of our duties.

However, one fact I shall admit without reservation. Every man, big or small, has his moments of relaxation and amenability; he has his own preference for those near him in whom or whose judgement he has instinctive faith. I was fortunate to be one of them for Sardar and I would confess that among those close to him. I undoubtedly occupied a high position. But others, who wanted their own propositions and points of view to be put across by us in his moments of relaxation utilised our services—particularly V. P. Menon and myself. So far as I am concerned, and I can only speak for myself, I conscientiously used these opportunities to put across matters which involved the public good or which would smoothen matters for mutual relationship or for the solution of the involved problems and not for the promotion, as far as I could assess the position, of individual interests where they were divorced from public interests. In fact, I can cite instances in which I intervented against myself or those in whom I might have been taken

to be interested. I am stating all this not with a view to parading my own virtues but to give the readers a correct idea of the influence which I could exercise on Sardar or on the course of events during the period I served him. Nevertheless, I have one consolation. What was said or entertained about me has not been my exclusive privilege. Private Secretaries or Secretaries of all important ministerial functionaries, to a more or less extent, share it. One hears similar stories about the influence of Principal Private Secretaries and Secretaries to the present and past Prime Ministers. I am therefore in very distinguished company.

In the meantime, preparations had been made for the Congress session in Nasik. As Sardar had foretold, Tandon's Presidential Address gave Pandit Nehru no cause for objection or offence. At the Working Committee meetings in Nasik, however, certain matters of controversy arose. Those interested were hoping that a clash would occur between Sardar and Pandit Nehru but Sardar was not going to oblige them. He observed complete silence and this was the first and last session of the Congress in which Sardar, though present took no part in the debate. Partly the reason was that Sardar was far from well but the more important reason was that Sardar did not want to give even the least cause to Pandit Nehru to feel that the conflict was a conflict of personalities between himself and the Prime Minister. The session thus passed off without an incident and we all returned to Delhi none the worse for the experience. However, the outward calm and silence of Sardar concealed a deep anguish within and that anguish referred to the interested propaganda let loose at the time that Sardar had forced matters on the basis of personalities and was trying to undermine Pandit Nehru's influence and position.

Apart from these pinpricks in the disposal of Government business the same tension continued in dealing with the problems of political organisation. The immediate problem was that of forming the Working Committee which obviously had to be done in consultation with Sardar and Pandit Nehru. Tandon's relation with Sardar was easy; there was no obstruction but Pandit Nehru was very difficult to tackle. At first he refused to serve on the Working Committee; Sardar told Tandon that he would not be able to keep out in the long run. He therefore advised Tandon to persist and go over the names with Pandit Nehru one by one. Tandon did so but, barring those selection cou'd not be objected to, Pandit Nehru objected to a number of individuals on the score of their representative character or similar objections. When Tandon reported this to Sardar he advised the Congress President to appoint Presidents of the Pradesh Congress Committees in lieu of his nominees to whom objection was being taken. Tandon did so and almost all the names were thus cleared one by one. There remained only two controversial figures—Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Mohan Lal Gautam whom Tandon insisted on having as one of his General Secretaries. Tandon refused to have the former and Pandit Nehru would not hear of the latter. When on Sardar's advice Tandon pressed the latter on the ground that the Congress President was entitled at least to a General Secretary of his choice, citing how

Pandit Nehru had himself appointed B.V. Keskar and Mridula Sarabhai as his General Secretaries despite opposition from the senior members of the Working Committee, he gave in.

By process of elimination only Rafi Ahmed Kidwai remained as a bone of contention—a big one at that. Pandit Nehru at first made it a matter of prestige. Both Raja Gopalachari and Maulana Azad who intervened with Sardar to persuade Tandon to agree, told Sardar that Pandit Nehru would not come in unless Rafi Ahmed Kidwai was nominated as a member. Sardar contested this proposition and expressed his inability to intervene as the relations between Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Tandon had been strained for several years. He pointed out that Rafi Ahmed Kidwai had made a number of allegations and insinuations which had hurt Tandon deeply and it would be impossible for him to persuade Tandon to take him. Rafi on his part at one stage threatened to expose Pandit Nehru if he joined the Working Committee without him. Maulana Azad appreciated Sardar's point but in his very persuasive style told Sardar somewhat as follows: 'You are an elder *(buzurg)*. Treat Jawahar like a child who is insisting on having his way.' Sardar smiled away this appeal and told Maulana to persuade Pandit Nehru to join the Working Committee and to tell him that Tandon would not be opposed to his policies and he would smoothen out differences even if they arose. Maulana Azad then said that Pandit Nehru was apprehensive about the Presidential address. Sardar told Maulana Azad that as he knew, that the Presidential address is not a mere individual effort and he was sure that Tandon would not do anything to which Pandit Nehru would be able to take objection. In fact Sardar advised Tandon to show his address to Pandit Nehru before getting it printed and delivering it.

Maulana Azad thereafter succeeded in persuading Pandit Nehru to withdraw his objection to being in the Working Committee without Rafii Ahmed Kidwai. There was a humorous interlude at the final meeting in 1, Aurangzeb Road when the composition of the Working Committee was settled between Sardar, Pandit Nehru, Tandon and Maulana Azad. The whole list was gone into and at the end Pandit Nehru said that the composition was colourless. Sardar said, 'Yes, if one gentleman with coloured glasses but plain white dress joined, it would add colour to the Working Committee.' The remark went home and everybody left the meeting in a light mood generated by the humorous remark. It is clear that throughout this controversy Sardar outmanoeuvred Pandit Nehru playing upon his desire not to be out of a position in which he would be able to influence the course of events notwithstanding the changed composition and circumstances. Throughout, Sardar avoided taking a position of opposition and completely eschewed any idea of a confrontation though those who were near Panditji kept on feeding him with this idea. Also throughout Sardar counselled Tandon to ensure that Pandit Nehru did not remain out and that he gave the latter no cause for telling the people that his fears of him had been vindicated. He knew that once Pandit Nehru was in prejudices would have a limited scope in actual discussions and debates inside the Working Committee. Thus both the apprehensions

entertained earlier that Pandit Nehru would resign his Prime Ministership and that he would refuse to be on the Working Committee had been laid to rest. I might add, however, that this whole controversy was handled not bilaterally but multilaterally and those involved in the drama included Pandit Nehru, Sardar, Tandon, Raja Gopalachari and Maulana Azad with Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Mridula Sarabhai taking the part of the troup in fairy story. Pandit Nehru clung to a friend for so long as he possibly could; Rafi Ahmed Kidwai was more than a friend, a lifelong companion; Mridula Sarabhai was devoted to Pandit Nehru and often functioned as his eyes and ears. Unfortunately, Pandit Nehru who occupied the central position chose to deal with the issue through others. Maulana Azad and Raja Gopalachari were the two main vehicles of communication; both of them realised that it was because of his commitments to Rafii Ahmed Kidwai and because of the latter's influence that Pandit Nehru was adopting the attitude he did not along with Sardar, they had the inward feelling that in the long run Pandit Nehru would not be able to keep either out of Government or the Working Committee. As often happens, unfortunately the intermediary shock-absorbers got the blame now and then, Maulana Azad from Sardar's end and Raja Gopalachari from Pandit Nehru's end, the latter at one stage shouting out 'You are at the bottom of the trouble.' That controversy more than any other occasion or incident revealed to me how on occasions a big man could be so small.

There is one significant step that Sardar was instrumental in achieving in the solution of the food problem of the country which, on account of imports, was draining away our foreign exchange resources. At that time Loy Henderson was the U.S. Ambassador and Sardar invited him to a quiet and exclusive lunch at which neither Maniben nor I was present. Sardar's proposal was that he might persuade his Government to grant a loan to India to finance import of two million tons of wheat which, according to Munshi who was the Food Minister, would enable him to build up some reserves. Sardar had secured Pandit Nehru's concurrence in the move and Loy Henderson fell in with his wishes. The U.S. Administration accepted the proposal and announcement was made by Sardar at Ahmedabad while replying to an address by the business community in October 1950. Sardar was somewhat hurt that Pandit Nehru did not respond to this U.S. gesture in the manner in which it was required and that he had to do it himself. The agreement was formalised next year.

Some time after the question of the Working Committee had been settled at Ahmedabad to which place Sardar went to fulfil certain obligations to his pet 'children', the Agricultural Institute at Anand and Vallabh Vidyanagar at Charotar and to honour certain long-deferred commitments, a touching event took place on his birthday, 31 October. Sardar was not well and was running temperature; he had also a digestive disorder. But he rose as usual and got ready and sent for me. Somehow I felt something wrong was round the corner and as I touched his feet I felt somewhat sad. Sardar asked me what it was. I told him that somehow I did not like his being ill

on his birthday. He consoled me and told me not to be weak-minded. Then came the *Rajpramukhs* of Rajasthan, PEPSU and Madhya Pradesh, on behalf of the Rulers and people of Indian States. They presented him with a token of their affection and tribute namely the White Paper on Indian States with their signatures on it. Sardar was greatly touched by this gesture and embraced them in response to it. Thereafter the usual vistis commenced which kept him busy; fortunately it did not affect his temperature although he did undergo considerable strain and his temperature came down the next day.

Earlier Sardar had paid a visit to Aurangabad and Hyderabad in the beginning of October after a short visit to Nagpur where he was glad to meet as always, his three lieutenants, the Governor Mangaldas Pakwasa and the Chief Minister and Home Minister Ravi Shankar Shukla and Dwarka Prasad Mishra. I had prevailed upon Sardar to visit Aurangabad to see the famous caves at Ellora and Ajanta. The season was excellent; after the monsoon every thing was green and fresh. The Deccan landscape with its undulating fields and verdure-covered hills was as pleasing as ever. The hill-streams were still running full and the cave and its environs skirted by a waterfall under which Sita was reported to have taken a bath were bewitchingly beautiful. Ajanta landscape was equally captivating. We were conducted, in both the places, by a very knowledgeable, able and intelligent archaeologist Yazdan assisted by Abdul Wahib Khan whose knowledge of history and archaeology was encyclopaedic. Sardar took lively interest both in the sculptures and the frescoes and the arrangements made for his comfort and convenience were thorough and left nothing to be desired; of all my visits to these famous caves, some before and some after, this one was the most rewarding. Sardar himself was greatly thrilled. In a speech at Hyderabad he referred to his visit to the caves, speaking in a philosophical vein.

> Capitals have come and gone, but India goes on as it is. Similar ideas struck me when I saw Ajanta and Ellora, their glory and their beauty and the masterly way in which art was executed. Then I felt that our existence was merely that of an insect, irrespective of whether we were big or small. Those who built these caves enshrining ancient history hardly ever realised that, for centuries, nobody would know about them.

Sardar and his party stayed in the Railway Hotel; the cleanliness and the orderliness of the place struck Sardar and when he returned he advised Gopalaswami Ayyanagar who was the Railway Minister, not to change the manageress, Mrs. Mitchell, just he had told Sri Prakash and Jairamdas Daulatram Governors of Assam, not to change the Swedish housekeeper at Government House who had kept the whole place neat, clean and tidy and in good shape. Sardar had an eye for beauty, and efficiency in the maintenance of Government Houses and felt that he had a role to play not only in hospitality and public image and relations but also in setting a good example. When the question of maintenance and other allowances for the upkeep of

these residences came up he took liberal attitude and in order to enable the Governors and the President to patronise arts and sports he allocated separate grants for the purpose to every one of them. This was of a piece with his direction issued to the Vindhya Pradesh Government not to disband the Maihar band of Indian orchestra led by that maestro Allauddin Khan. My attention had been drawn to the threat of such disbandment by Allauddin's son-in-law Ravi Shankar who is now winning laurels in the field of instrumental *sitar* music both in India and abroad, and I had drawn Sardar's attention to this issue. Similarly Sardar prevented the dissolution of the Indore Cricket Club with stalwarts like C.K. Nayadu,his brother C.S Nayudu and Mushtaq Ali. The latter is happily still with us but unfortunately not in a position to satisfy completely his passion for the service in the cause of Indian Cricket. Similarly, it was Sardar's intervention at the instance of General Cariappa, the Commander-in Chief of the Indian Army that saved racing in Bombay and elsewhere from threatened closure. That single act of his was responsible for the significant impetus given to horse breeding in India.

Sardar's interest in nation-building was thus not confined only to politics and administration but was all-embracing. I remember taking him to watch a cricket match in Delhi between India and a Commonwealth Eleven. He was introduced to the two teams lined up in front of the Pavilion. He returned to his seat and watched the game for an hour. When he returned home, I asked him what he thought of Indian Cricket. He said, 'Cricket needs both brains and brawn.' He felt that regarding the latter the other team had an advantage over us and that we would not succeed in international cricket unless we had physique and physical fitness to match them. He also said that we must have a fast bowler without whom we were likely to make the impression we had to. I might also add that when the Saurashtra Government wanted to stop the allowance of Vinoo Mankad and a few others who had been patronised by the Jamnagar House, Sardar had again to intervene to prevent them from doing so.

There is another notable example of his interest in and patronage of the arts. Soon after I joined him, Prithviraj Kapoor approached him with his problems connected with Prithvi Theatres which has produced dramas of quality and oriental content and appeal like *Pathan*, *Ghaddar* and *Diwar*. At that time if I remember right *Pathan* was the rage but Prithviraj Kapoor's enterprise was running at a loss. Both he and his famous son Raj Kapoor came to see Sardar and he directed them to see me and told me that he would like to help them to be able to stand on their own feet. I looked into the case and felt that the best course would be to give the plays exemption from entertainment tax on account of their educational and artistic value. Sardar approved of the suggestion and wrote to the Congress Premiers of States accordingly and Prithvi Theatres got the much needed and well-merited relief. His interest in the film industry was evidenced in another way. I have already mentioned that towards the end of 1948, Sardar gave up the portfolio of Information and Broadcasting and R.R. Diwakar was appointed Minister of

State. Diwakar used to consult Sardar off and on and of the subjects of discussion was the future of the Film Industry. As a result it was decided that an Enquiry Committee be set up. When the constitution of the Committee was being discussed Diwakar expressed his keenness to appoint me on it. I was reluctant to accept it since my own job was more then a full-time one but Sardar was very particular that I should. I told him that I would not be able to participate in the meetings except occasionally and that too probably on weekends. I do not know why but it seems that both Diwakar and Sardar set much store by my membership and S.K. Patil who was appointed Chairman also insisted. I accordingly agreed. It taxed my time and energies quite a bit since it generally involved my having to go through the papers after dinner, sometimes till after midnight and it also meant considerable extra touring. However, the Committee had a very able, competent and knowledgeable Secretary in S. Gopalan who was on the staff of All-India Radio, and a asset. The drafting of the Report was largely left to him and me; since I had to do so at home and after dinner most of the writing so far as I was concerned was in manuscript and if it is considered that I had to write out a few Chapters and parts of several Chapters myself and carry out emendations in my own hand, the amount of extra work that fell to me on this account was even more taxing.

Twenty-three

Hyderabad Again

HYDERABAD AFFAIRS had been claiming Sardar's personal attention from time to time. In the first place there was constant pressure on him to bring in popular elements in the administration. Secondly, Hyderabad was under central administration and the Hyderabad lobby was active in Delhi. Pandit Nehru evinced an interest in Hyderabad born of his consideration for the welfare of the Muslim minority. There was considerable Parliamentary concern for happenings in that State, and with active attempts to deal with anti-social elements, partly the aftermath of the Police Action but largely due to Communist activities in Nalgonda and Warrangal, Hyderabad had perhaps acquired the status of a problem state under the States Ministry next only to Jammu and Kashmir. V.P. Menon was under constant pressure from several directions—administrative purists on the one side and so-called liaberals on the other. There were also the champions of pacification, the State Congress, and those who wanted the State to break up. But the most absorbing current problem was putting down what was virtually a Communist organised attempt to supplant administration in Warrangal and Nalgonda. There were critics of the Civil Administration under Vellodi the Chief Minister who had taken over from General Chaudhury when he reverted to the Army. Thus Sardar who had to deal with political and administrative problems at topmost level was under considerable cross-fire.

However, despite these various handicaps a great deal of substantial work had been done. The finances of the State had been put in shape and steadily acquired a balance, achieved two years later. The Communist menace was shorn of its fangs; the forces of law and order came down upon them with a heavy hand and under the influence of that action the villages were gradually brought round to cooperation from their inital attitude of sullenness and stand-offishness. The abolition of the *jagirdari* system had been achieved under the stimulus of a system of compensation which was on the whole fair and compared favourably with that allowed in Congress-run Provinces. The entire legal system had been overhauled. A greater assimilation of the administration with Indian Provinces had also been brought about. Financial relationship between Hyderabad and Government of India on the basis of that subsisting between Provinces and the Dominion Government had also been achieved. The best in the old regime was retained and it must be stated fairness to the old administration that it had taken many steps towards giving the State an enlightened rule. Its departmentalisation, its administrative

services, its promotion of Urdu language and culture and replacement of English by Urdu and its educational system were highlights of the administration. Osmania University under the able and distinguished Vice-Chancellorship of Ali Yavar Jang, the efficient Public Works Department, for which credit should go to its chiefs like Zain Yar Jang, and the Railways, the judiciary headed by an eminent advocate from Lucknow, Mirza Samiullah Beg, a friend of my father's, were a credit to the administration. It was comparatively easy to build on this past despite the serious jolts that had been given to it by the events since Partition, involving *Razakar* activities and culminating in the Police Action.

Two main problems which taxed us all were the position of Muslims in the State and the introduction of the popular element in the administration, a matter on which the Hyderabad State Congress was both keen and persistent. On the first question despite impressions to the contrary, Sardar was both liberal in his approach. Although he had been affected deeply by the activities of the *Razakars* he was not the one to countenance an attitude of revenge for those activities on the Muslim population; on the other hand, he was very keen on the pacification of Muslims and always instructed those connected with the administration to avoid giving any impression to them that they were a 'displaced' community. His attitude and outlook had been sufficiently indicated in his speeches on his first visit to Hyderabad in February 1949. His reluctance to the immediate introduction of the popular element in the administration was to a large extent due to his anxiety to avoid introducing popular anti-Muslim prejudices in the functioning of Government. He realised that the rank and file of the Hyderabad Congress were, quite naturally, unable to forget and forgive the past, with the result that even Ramakrishna Rao, undoubtedly a talented person of liberal views, was not so popular among them as he deserved to be. While keeping out of mischief those elements among the Muslims who were rabid enough not to adjust themselves to the change and were disposed to cause mischief, Sardar saw to it that the preponderance of the Muslims in the administrative services and the lion's share that they commanded under the old dispensation were not too suddenly cut down. It was inevitable that the non-Muslim majority which had not received its due share of consideration from the old regime should receive greater attention from the new one. But the consequential damage to the Muslim position in the State was kept to the practicable minimum. Even some of the leading lights of the administration who were participants in the events of the recent past were forgiven wherever it was possible to do so.

However, the pressure of the State Congress for participation in Government was steadily increasing and could not be contained for long. Sardar himself was not disinclined to introduce such participation. He was waiting, however, for overcoming the shock of initial dislocation, for stabilising and consolidating the change, for completing the process of reconciliation and for putting the administration in a proper key, and affectively suppressing the threat to law and order and established administration by anti-social elements. This was largely achieved by the middle of 1950, Sardar then authorised the first

stage in popularising the administration by introducing a team of non-officials in the Ministry. This was done on 12 June 1950 and the Hyderabad State Congress was headed by Digambarrao Bindu a level-headed and enlightened Congress leader who was a foil to Swami Ramanand Tirtha to whose inclusion many in the State Congress were opposed. Sardar on that occasion sent a message to Bindu which I reproduce below for the norms it set for the conduct for the new participants:

> On the reconstitution of your Ministry so as to include non-official Ministers I send to you and your colleagues my best wishes and blessings for a successful term. The arrangement is starting with the maximum amount of goodwill secured for an institution of this kind. Comparison with the unfortunate past precedent of dyarchical form of Government functioning under an uncongenial atmosphere is neither fair nor appropriate. The precedent had all the handicaps and difficulties which doomed its success from the very inception. In Hyderabad the new system of Government will function with faith and trust in each other and I hope you and your colleagues both officials and non-officials will be actuated by that breadth of vision and statesmanship and spirit of mutual help and cooperation which have characterised the negotiations which you so skilfully conducted for bringing about this arrangement. I am confident that the association of the State Congress with the administration will not only bring you a full measure of popular support and help but also provide the popular representatives with an opportunity of training and experience for and of which await them in no distant future. You and your colleagues can rely on the goodwill, help and cooperation of Government, of myself and the States Ministry.

The State Congress at the time was a house divided against itself. There were currents and cross-currents and as usual attainment of seats of power, accentuated these differences particularly with Swami Ramanand Tirtha out of Government. The problems of Sardar, therefore, increased rather than decreased with the introduction of popular elements in the administration. However, Vellodi with his experience, directness and tact mixed with frankness was able to steer the administration efficiently through the trouble. What is remarkable is that he did not lose his sense of humour and shrewdness of judgement and this appealed to Sardar greatly. Nevertheless matters reached a stage when Sardar had to intervene actively and decided to visit Hyderabad to see things for himself. The occasion was readily provided by a long-deferred engagement to inaugurate Kasturbagram a few miles from Hyderabad. Explaining the policies of Government, Sardar spoke at a public meeting in Hyderabad as follows :

> I have come here to see what things are like; what your aims and aspirations are and how far you are realising them. If there is any lack of confidence and harmony, then we must confess that we have failed and we must

improve upon our performance. If some people feel that we are guided by a spirit of revenge, they are very much mistaken; there is no hostility and enmity among ourselves. If anyone finds that he is out of place here, we cannot help it. Similarly, if action is being taken against anybody according to law, it is difficult to prevent the law from taking its course. Take the case of ex-Ministers. The point to consider is whether, the principals having gone, we should proceed against others. There is also the case of Government servants. It is said that they have done things because they were forced to do so under superiors' orders. We have certainly to take that into account, but for all this I have to seek your help. You must create conditions in which these things can be done in a proper manner. I have neither a feeling of revenge, nor of hostility. If I were inimically disposed, I would not have been worthy of the place I occupy. You can therefore, depend on me to do my bit but you have to do yours also.

In order to carry out the tasks he had set before himself during the visit, he subjected himself to considerable strain and addressed a number of meetings. What he said at those meetings covered not merely what was passing through his mind then but many matters and problems which had been agitating him for several months. The speeches therefore provide an index to his general thoughts and outlook.

At the laying of the foundation-stone of Gandhi Bhawan on 7 October he dwelt on Gandhiji's ideals and had a few words to say about the real India and what the duty of Hyderabad is.

In his speech he emphasised how Gandhiji had cried himself hoarse that India would not really be free until there was communal harmony, until untouchability was abolished, people produced their own cloth and food, and there was one national language. Sardar pointed out forcibly how far short the nation still was of these basic objectives. If we did not fully understand, or live up to Gondhiji's message, we could not make the country progressive; we would only be exploiting Gandhiji's name for selfish ends.

But the most memorable speech was made at a mammoth public meeting at Fateh Maidan the same evening. In that speech he covered a multiplicity of problems. There was at the time a plea for general amnesty to those who participated in the *Razakar* activities. Explaining his stand on that question he observed:

We do not wish to harm any one or consciously do any damage to anybody's interests. We are prepared to forget and forgive, but if anyone wishes to be a martyr and get his name registered in God's book as such, how can we help it ? You say that some have obeyed their superiors' orders and therefore they were helpless. You are quite right in emphasising that point but we have to see with reference to individual cases as to what extent, in what manner and under what conditions those orders were obeyed and whether it was necessary for a man to have obeyed those orders.

Dealing with the escape of Laik Ali to Pakistan and reports of the celebration of his escape by certain elements in Hyderabad he said forthrightly:

> That I am right in entertaining doubts is borne out by what happened when Laik Ali went away from here. Do you wish to say that it was only my responsibility to see that he did not go and that you do not share it ? How many of you told him that he must come back, because he had escaped in a cowardly manner ? How many of you dared say that he had indulged in an unmanly conduct in leaving his sister behind to spend her time in jail, while he himself went to enjoy in Pakistan ? If I were a Muslim, I would have wept over this conduct and felt sorry not only for myself but also for those who felt happy over his escape.
>
> Therefore, when I hear that some Muslims celebrated the occasion, danced with joy and feasted, I naturally begin to entertain doubts whether Muslims here feel that their future lies in India. I do not say that they are the only ones to blame. I know that when Gandhiji was murdered, many Hindus celebrated the occasion in a similar way. I only wish to emphasise that until this devilry goes out of these two communities there would be no real peace.

He enunciated his views regarding the position of Muslims in the following words:

> I do wish to say to Muslims that they are equals, that they have equal rights as Indian citizens and that they are entitled to live in peace and in complete protection of the law and Government. At the same time, every Indian citizen, whether he is a Hindu or Muslim, will have to behave as an Indian, feel as an Indian and act as Indian, and the sooner they realise this, the better. Some might think that Pakistan is a place of pilgrimage for them. If they really believe that this is so, it is their duty to leave without any delay. We shall place no difficulty in their path. We are really committed to give such facilities, and we wish to do so. Such a departure would be in the interests not only of the man who feels this way, but also in the interests of the Muslims of India.

With equal bluntness he dealt with the problems posed by Partition and the subsequent conduct of Pakistan and he utilised the topic to say a few words about the policy of secularism as well. He said:

> We thought, we would be able to live in peace and with mutual love and affection, each country seeking its own destiny and shaping it in whatever manner it choose. But Pakistan choose a different policy and a different path; I wish to tell them that in spite of their worst attempts, the mutual feelings that have been engendered amongst Hindus and Muslims as a result of centuries of cordial neighbourliness will not be eradicated. Hearts cannot be sundered by these pressure tactics. If anyone amongst you believes

that they will protect you, you will be sadly disillusioned. I would, therefore, ask my Muslim friends not to put faith in those words and not to be misled by those tactics. I would also appeal to Hindus to forget the past. After all this was engineered by a comparatively few who live in the cities. Lakhs of Muslims in the villages hardly knew anything about it. They never bothered about Pakistan. What wrong have they committed to deserve a different treatment ?

Dealing with the current topic of a 'no-war declaration' about which the Pakistan Prime Minister had made a public statement he retorted:

If, therefore, the Pakistan Prime Minister today talks of issuing a 'no war declaration', we have to match those words with deeds. We have to make sure that there is no disparity between the language of the heart and the language of the lips. It is only when there is no such disparity, that talk of 'no war declaration' will have any meaning. After all we have also to see what has gone before. Who has pushed out Sindhis; who has deprived them of their property; who has ejected them from their houses ? On the one side, they talk of India being an enemy and their being protectors of the Muslims in India; on the other, they talk of a 'no war declaration'. I am sorry that, at this juncture, I cannot say more, because I do not wish to increase the poison that has already been injected.

On the other hand, I earnestly and sincerely wish to lessen it. I also say frankly that it is madness to desire war between the two and, if they really wish to have no war, we shall ourselves raise no objection. But they must act in the spirit. Sind and East Bengal hardly indicate that spirit. What has happened in Sind before and what has subsequently happened in East Bengal hardly bear out that spirit. It is true that with regard to East Bengal we concluded an agreement. Nobody has worked harder to make that agreement acceptable to Indians at large than myself, but the agreement can only be tested by the conditions for security which are created in India and Pakistan. If, in spite of that agreement they say we are their enemy, then nobody is a worse enemy of theirs than they themselves.

The canal water dispute had created quite an stir in India. Even in the Cabinet, differences had manifested themselves on the liberal attitude which Pandit Nehru had taken in the matter and there were open clashes between him and N.V. Gadgil who was the Minister in charge. Referring to that dispute Sardar observed:

Then there is the question of canal waters. They owe us dues for the water that they have taken, but they will not pay up. They want to settle this in their own way. There is enough water for both the countries. They have deprived the Hindus and Sikhs of their canal lands and pushed them out. Now they wish to say those who have come to Punjab from the West have no claims to the waters which are flowing in their own area. This is a

doubly injurious game and we are not prepared to surrender our legitimate rights in that matter either.

Nevertheless, we shall never obstruct efforts at peace, if they are honestly meant. When we are satisfied that they really mean business, that they really intend what they say, we shall certainly go all out to compose our differences. It was in that spirit that we signed the Delhi Agreement. You see how it is functioning. The true test of that agreement will come when Muslims can come back freely to India and Hindus can go back to East Bengal.

Explaining his attitude on the return of those who wished to come back from Pakistan and those who wished to go to Pakistan Sardar observed:

For our part, our doors are open for those who wish to return. Even if Laik Ali returns, I shall allow him to come back. After all, he thought that Hyderabad would be saved if he persued the course which he had set himself. He thought that the welfare of the Muslims of Hyderabad in it. Events proved that he was wrong and he has gone.

Similarly, those who wish to go from Hyderabad have the way open, but those who remain in India, will not be the concern of Pakistan. They will be our responsibility and we shall discharge that responsibility in spite of Pakistan. The pity of it, however, is that even as two different countries they would not let us remain in peace.

On Communist terrorism he said:

There is a party which had made Hyderabad notorious in the world. They are Communists, but all who masquerade under that name are not Communists. Many have got an appetite for loot and murder. They are nothing but murderers and dacoits. They say they will create a China in India. But they forget that even in China, the methods which they are practising here were not followed. The Chinese acted differently. They did not slaughter innocent women and children. If they think they can bring about a China in India by these methods, they are living in a fool's paradise. To shoot down or brutally hack to pieces innocent villagers including women and children is not Communism. They bring disgrace to Communism. I should like to tell them that I shall do my best to uproot all those who are indulging in those brutalities. No such crimes are committed in any other part of the world by people on their own kith and kin, but you must find out where they get their arms and ammunition from. Where do their leaders live? Do they live outside Hyderabad? They certainly do not live in Nalgonda. Unfortunately it is a fact that they live in Hyderabad and Secunderabad. Who shelters them? Who gives them food? Who conceals them? All those who do these and not inform the police about their whereabouts are as much guilty of the brutalities which these people are committing as the actual perpetrators of the crime. It is to deal with this menace that I have given you a select officer who is risking his life every

day to rid you of this menace. He has a very difficult task, but he is doing all this in order to see that this threat to peaceful and prosperous life is removed.

As I have said earlier, Sardar was quite affected by dissensions in the ranks of the State Congress and he made it a point to drive a few home-truths into the minds of Congress Workers at the meeting at Shah Manzil, the headquarters of the Congress on 6 October 1950. Here are some telling extracts of his speech which have some relevance even in conditions of today.

He did not hesitate to tell the Congress Workers of the internal rivalries which he had all along tried to compose. He told them of the traditions of the Indian National Congress, which was an old institution with deep-rooted foundations adding with justified pride, 'I cannot see any prospect of a rival organisation for the next ten or fifteen years.' He reminded them that Hyderabad consisted of three parts—Maharashtra, Andhra and Karnataka—adding, as though he foresaw the later linguistic cleavages, that the Congress alone could cut across the narrow parochial patriotism and place before everyone an all-India perspective and outlook. He repeated his warning that for our economic ills the only sovereign remedy was more production, whether in agriculture or in industry.

Sardar's visit to Hyderabad, one of his last few visits outside Delhi was one of the longest he made to any place and at the same time it was one of the most effective in both the exposition of his views and the influence it exerted on the minds of the people and the administration of the State. I would let Sardar himself sum up the visit in his own words for in one of his most moving messages he sent to the people of Hyderabad, he said:

> I have now completed my five days' visit to the Hyderabad State and I should like to say at once how much I have enjoyed this stay in spite of a rather strenuous and exacting programme of public and private engagments. The ruling impression of mine is one of uniform kindness and affection which I received from the people of Hyderabad and the governing emotion is one of thankfulness to H. E. H. the Rajpramukh, the Government and the State Congress of Hyderabad for the generous hospitality extended to me and the excellent and efficient arrangements that were made for my stay and the various engagements which I had to fulfil.
>
> As I said yesterday in my public speech, mine was in the nature of an inspection visit. I wanted to see for myself how the new Government was functioning, how the people of different communities in Hyderabad were faring under that Government, and how they and the political institutions in the State were preparing themselves for the constitutional and political responsibilities that were awaiting them. I have already expressed myself frankly and fully on these basic purposes of my visit and I need not say anything more except this that Hyderabad has yet to justify the changes that have made and has to build up its administration and mould its political institutions before it can honestly and sincerely say that it can boldly face the

future. I can assure the Hyderabad is of my continued interest, assistance and guidance in this difficult task of accomplishing all this within the few months that lie ahead and I am confident that if they all work with honesty of purpose and united will and determination, they will be able to march with the rest of India in the fulfilment of their obligations and mission under the new Constitution.

I have throughout been emphasising the unity of India. Never is that oneness tested better than in adversity. The rumblings and tremors of the earthquake in Assam cannot be confined to the geographical limits of that trouble-afflicted State. It is the bounden duty of all India to share to the full the plight and misery of Assam and I should like to appeal to the people of Hyderabad to contribute generously to the Assam Relief Fund which their Chief Minister has opened. The Rajpramukh and the Government of Hyderabad have already set an example to them all by contributing sums of five and one lakh respectively towards that Fund. It now remains for the people of Hyderabad to make a fitting response to the call of suffering humanity.

Let me also appeal to the public of Hyderabad to extend their full cooperation to their Government in the task of restoring normal conditions in the disturbed areas of Nalgonda and Warangal. Already the firm and ameliorative measures adopted by Government are having their effect. It remains for people to back these efforts by vigilance and a full realisation of their civic responsibility without which these measures cannot be fully effective. It is not right or fair to leave matters to Government alone; this is an undertaking in which fullest possible cooperation and accord are necessary between the various agencies of Government and the people. In particular a heavy responsibility rests on the Press and I hope my journalist friends will bear with me if I give them some special advice in response to the request made to me by them yesterday. Power of the pen and of the tongue has to be used with the utmost discretion and a full sense of public duty. Freedom of expression is a fundamental obligation. To exercise that right and to discharge that obligation requires a good deal of circumspection, discretion and wisdom. I would, therefore, ask them to use those powers and the freedom which they undoubtedly possess with no consideration save that of public interest and if they do so they will realise that thereby they have built a power of the Press which no Government can ignore or overlook. It is the duty of the Press as much as of Government to uphold regard for law and to stress the value of uprightness and integrity in public conduct. I would, therefore, ask my journalist friends to lend helping hand to Government, irrespective of their political affiliations in inculcating respect for law and constitutionalism and in bringing about the prevalence of conditions of civic responsibility and consciousness, which are necessary preparatory measures for a people standing on the threshold of complete democracy.

Much of what he said was in line with his message to the Nation on 15 August 1950 :

Today we are celebrating the third anniversary of independence. Looking back at the broad sweep of events since we became free my predominant feeling is one of thankfulness and relief. We are grateful to Providence for having seen the country safely out of many a critical period. We have been able to service many trials and difficulties which lay in our path.

In the world of today every country has to tread warily along the road to recovery from the legacies of the last war. We have had to be doubly cautious because, in addition to the troubles which a distracted world at large faces today, we had our own peculiar problems, problems which affected the very roots of our existence, tested every fibre of our being reacted on the very fundamentals of our life and touched the very foundations of our infant democracy.

There are bound to be different reactions to our survival. Some will call it the miracle of our staying power. Some may say that the country has escaped a worse fate in spite of us. Many will probably give us the credit for having muddled through our difficulties.

We, as Government, of course, claim that despite our shortcomings the ship of State has been steered safely through the many rocks and shoals that lay in its course. Whatever the views, I am confident of one thing—namely, that if we have survived, it is because of our own intrinsic efforts, in whatever directions they may have been exerted. We have relied on ourselves, whether in the external or the internal domain, and it is that self-reliance which has enabled us to achieve consolidation at home and prestige abroad.

Today, therefore, if I have faith in the future, it is based on this spirit of self-reliance. Nevertheless, I would not be true to myself if I did not confess to a sense of apprehension and anxiety. Certain tendencies and developments in our administrative and public affairs fill me with some disquiet and sadness of heart. The country can realise the feelings of one who has spent the major part of his public life in witnessing epics of sacrifice and selfless endeavour and feats of discipline and unity and who now finds enacted before him scenes which mock at the past.

Our public life seems to be degenerating into a fen of stagnant waters ; our conscience is troubled with doubts and despair about the possibilities of improvement. We do not seem to be profiting either from history or experience. We appear helplessly to be watching the sickle of time taking away the rich corn in us, leaving behind the bare and withered stalks.

Yet the tasks that confront us are as complex and taxing as ever. They demand the best in us while we face them with indifferent resources. We seem to devote too much time to things that hardly matter and too little to these that count. We talk while the paramount need is that of action. We are critical of other people's exertions, but lack the will to contribute our own. We are trying to overtake others by giant strides while we have hardly learnt to walk.

On this, the third milestone of our career as a free country, I hope my

countrymen will forgive me if I have tried to turn the searchlight inwards. In my life, I have now reached a stage when time is of the essence. Age has not diminished the passion which I bear to see my country great and to ensure that the foundations of our freedom are well and securely laid. Bodily infirmity has not dimmed my ardour to exert my utmost for the peace, prosperity and advancement of the Motherland. But the bird of time has a little way to fly, and lo ! it is on the wing.

With all the sincerity and earnestness at my command and claiming the privilege of age, I, therefore, appeal to my fellow countrymen on this solemn and auspicious day to reflect on what they see in and around themselves and, with the strength and faith that comes from self-introspection, sustain the hope and confidence which an old servant of theirs still has in the future of our country.

These statements, coming as they did, from one who was about to cross the ripe old age of seventy-five and who had spent the last three years valiantly fighting the Muslim League menace and skilfully saving the country from the wreckage of Partition, consolidating the hard-won freedom and suppressing the anti-social elements who created explosive situations here and there was well received by the people. He had achieved a historic process of integration of the country, vigilantly maintained peace and security of the State and breathed the refreshing and invigorating air of patriotism and devotion to the country. A grateful nation breathlessly watched one achievement after another and responded nobly and appreciatively to these thoughts and feelings. He knew, however, that the sun was going to set soon for him. Pandit Nehru's attitude in these closing stages was causing him deep sorrow and anguish and it was amid sobs and with great emotion that he referred to the topic in his speech when laying the foundation of Kasturbagram:

Today's auspicious day will be written in letters of gold in the history of Madhya Bharat. When I laid the foundation of Madhya Bharat State, I had great hopes and aspirations. I have not abandoned them yet. We are all children. We make mistakes and learn from experience. We are still infants in the realm of democracy. We shall, I hope, be able to run after tumbling down now and then, and will not lag behind other countries. After all, Bapu gave life to a dead country. He breathed a new spirit into a lifeless body. Ba lent him a helping hand in that great task. Let the picture of both of them be constantly before our eyes. We may commit errors. They will always be there to take our account. We were all soldiers in their camp. I have been referred to as the Deputy Prime Minister. I never think of myself in these terms. Jawaharlal Nehru is our leader. Bapu appointed him as his successor and had even proclaimed him as such. It is the duty of all Bapu's soldiers to carry out his bequest. Whoever does not do so from his heart in the proper spirit will be a sinner before God. I am not a disloyal soldier, I never think of the place that I am occupying. I only know this much and am satisfied—I still am where Bapu posted me.

Today, I see before me the whole picture of life ever since I joined Bapu's

army. The love which Ba bore to me, I never experienced from my own mother. I was not lucky to have experienced my own mother's love ; Ba more than made up for it. Whatever paternal love fell to my lot, I got it, from Bapu and Ba. I felt, therefore, so proud today to have to preside over the Trust which Bapu made and lay the foundation of its centre.

But when these words were mentioned to Pandit Nahru by a mutual confidant. the former dismissed it as being 'over-sentimental'. Pandit Nahru's inward feelings came to the fore occasionally, but in isolated sentences. Even when the sun's last rays were causing deep shadows, Pandit Nehru could not challenge him openly and had to resort to these stray moments to be briefly expressive. But some really controversial matters awaited Sardar's return from a visit to Ahmedabad to which I have already referred. It is now the last six weeks of his life, painful and tragic in many ways, to which I shall turn.

Twenty-four

The End

SARDAR RETURNED from his tour to Ahmedabad in worse health than when he had left Delhi. It was clear that the strain was telling upon his health. His iron constitution which had withstood the onslaught of pressure on his heart in March 1948 was giving way. The value of life is seldom realised as long as one is in good health. In the case of great men like Sardar it was necessary to appreciate the preciousness of his life. But those who should have known better in this respect did not show any sign of recognition that one who in national interests needed to be preserved and allowed to serve the nation in peace and comparative freedom from strain, should be saved from the eroding effects of mental worries and physical exertion. Hardly did anyone outside his immediate entourage show any concern in this respect and what followed immediately on his return demonstrated the callousness of environment to the well-being of a precious life.

As soon as he arrived, he was informed that a meeting of the Cabinet had been fixed within a matter of minutes. Sardar had hardly time to go to his house before he had to depart for the Cabinet meeting. Yet the subject was of such importance, namely Chinese designs on Tibet, that he could not afford to stay away. So off he went leaving us all in a state of uncertainty as to when he would return. The problem of Tibet had a history. It was a theocratic State, distinctly not Chinese except as a matter of imperialist expansion, and the exercise of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet had not been even nominal. In fact it could be said that the suzerainty of China over Tibet secured as a matter of conquest, had fallen into disuse and, barring its being recalled at the time of agreements with Tibet, it had ceased to be of any effective value. Its status as a buffer State was more a relic of the past then a thing of the present in our age of aerial communications or warfare. Recent history has shown that the imperialism of Communist States is as much an irrevocable fact as that of emperors or czars or of democracies in the past. Tibet, presided over by a religious head the Dalai Lama, was not therefore immune from becoming the subject of Chinese imperialist ambition even though there was no emperor, but a Communist divinity presiding over the affairs of China. The Dalai Lama had received forewarnings of these moves and got in touch with us through emissaries; he wanted to be rescued and we had examined the possibilities of sending an aircraft to rescue him should the Chinese presume to violate the spiritual dignity of his person.

For India the Chinese move into Tibet was fraught with inconvenient if not

dangerous possibilities. It was known that our northern border with Tibet was defined in agreements with Tibet entered into by the British. The fact that Chinese consent required on the basis of its nominal suzerainty over Tibet was not solemnly affirmed was also within our knowledge. That the population along these borders was more Tibetan than Indian was also a fact. We had special treaty relations with Tibet in the matter of Indo-Tibetan trade and the protection or policing of the trade routes and we had a special diplomatic and military status in Lhasa. It is true that all these were legacies of a historic past regime which had disappeared on the advent of Independence but that did not mean that all history should be written off at one stroke particularly when China was attempting to revive a history of even earlier dates. Moreover the Chinese regime politically and otherwise was such that the farther it could be kept away from our borders the better for us and perhaps for the rest of South-east Asia.

I had been initiated into the Chinese problem earlier when as Deputy Secretary in the Home Department I had to deal with the China Town *imperium-in-imperio* in Calcutta. The war-time strategy on the Burma front had brought into focus the three-nation border problems, India-Burma-China, and both friendly and hostile uses of the Ledo Road. As a student of history I had studied the foreign policy of the British Government and its impact on Indo-Tibetan and Indo-Afghan relations and the importance of Ladakh and the MacMahon Line. Consequently the material supplied to us by our ambassador in Peking, Sardar Panikkar, himself a savant of history, and the Ministry of External Affairs, at that time presided over by Girija Shankar Bajpai and educated on the Chinese question by K.P.S. Menon with his Chungking experience, was not quite new to me. Sardar went to the Cabinet meeting without any study of the papers and without any discussion with me. But during the Cabinet discussion, which showed some cleavage between Pandit Nahru, mostly taking the cue from Sardar Panikkar, and K.P.S. Menon and Girija Shankar Bajpai mostly relying on history and British diplomacy, Sardar instinctively realised the dangers inherent in the Chinese move. In fact, the question was a simple one from the point of view of India's interests and the answer depended largely on whether we could rely on Chinese protestations of peaceful intentions and friendship and goodwill, so that our own interests, secured through historical developments and consecrated by lapse of time, could be adequately safeguarded. Sardar in his reaction to the Chinese case, forcefully presented by our ambassador in Peking, turned his attention on this simple question. It was a treat to see Sarder condense enormous papers and complex arguments into simple issues and this is how he looked at the matter, notwithstanding the learned views expressed in the Cabinet at length in a manner which could hardly restore order out of the chaos of papers and views.

When he returned from the Cabinet meeting he seemed very agitated, anxious and thoughtful. He was entirely distrustful of the Chinese intentions or words and very suspicious of their designs. He had the feeling that Sardar Panikkar had too readily fallen into the trap set by the Chinese, not so much

out of conviction (Sardar had a high opinion of Panikkar's intellectual gifts including his casuistry when it suited him) as out of a strong desire to suit his views to Pandit Nahru's well-known sympathy for the regime in China. He had also a great deal of reverence for the spiritual head of Tibet, the Dalai Lama and reacted sensitively to his plea for help. His feelings of antipathy to Communism in its militant role were well-known; he thought that Chinese Communism would prove more dangerous than Russian Communism though both were not only burdened but deeply inspired by the imperialistic past. After some time he called me to discuss the whole matter in its historical and contemporary perspective and told me about the trend of discussions in the Cabinet. He felt so keenly about the problem that he asked me to draft a letter to Pandit Nehru so that the Prime Minister would not be in any state of uncertainty about his views.

During the discussion I had apprised him of the historical background of the case and we went through the actual position of the border on the map. Sardar indicated to me a broad outline of what should be included in the letter and what should be emphasised and finally give me a clear enunciation of what should, in his view, be done. He told me that the problem was too important and serious to be left to the realm of discussions and must be dealt with on paper. I wrote out a draft in my own hand at night and put it up to Sardar after getting it typed the next day. He approved of it with some amendments and then the letter, which has seen the light of day thanks to the resourcefulness of the late K.M. Munshi, who had it published in the *Bhavan Journal's*, was sent to the Prime Minister. There was such a fundamental difference between the approaches of the Prime Minister and his Deputy—trust against sceptioism, assumptions against facts, wishful thinking against realism—that the letter was unlikely to change the Prime Minister's mind which had been made up. However, I know that the letter made a deep impression on Gopalaswami Ayyangar and Girija Shankar Bajpai to whom Sardar showed it.

The discussions on the problem of Tibet continued. Pandit Nehru, soon realised the embarrassing weight of opinions in the Cabinet Committee and particularly found it difficult to deal with Sardar's analysis of the situation. Rajagopalachari mostly shared Sardar's views and Gopalaswami while maintaining a balance, slightly tilted it in Sardar's favour. Pandit Nehru looked for support and found it in Maulana Azad whom he had appointed as a Member of the External Affairs Committee of the Cabinet. Telegraphic messages passed to and fro between Delhi and Peking and eventually it was, as far as I recollcet, towards the end of November at a meeting in Sardar's house that the final plunge was taken despite Sardar's words of caution though not of formal dissent. Upto the end he stuck to the line which he had taken in his letter of 7 November 1950 though as his energies flagged the vehemence of his opposition declined.

The relations between Sardar and Pandit Nehru continued to be strained. Sardar's declining health confined him more and more to his house. Medication did not prove effective ; his pulse-rate was going up and he was losing

strength. There was no doubt that the physical deterioration of his health was accelerated by his mental anguish I remember that while a meeting of the Working Committee was being held at his house, Sardar went to his bedroom followed by Pandit Nehru and he said to the latter, 'I find these days you are losing your temper quite often. I do not like the state of tension that prevails. Why don't you have it out ?' Pandit Nehru replied that he himself sometimes did not know how his mind worked. Sardar then told him that despite all his efforts to soften matters and sweeten the embittered relationship he found that things were not taking a salutary aspect and as soon as he got better he was determined to have a long talk with him and put matters right. There the conversation ended but much to the regret of Sardar, the opportunity for such a discussion never came. Often they communicated with each other through Rajagopalachari acting as an intermediary, who had achieved that unenviable position during the controversy regarding the Presidential election. Rajendra Prasad, the President, another veteran Congress leader, who could have helped to ease matters had already incurred Pandit Nehru's antipathy by presuming to thwart his wishes regarding Rajaji's candidature and consequently had opted himself out of that role.

The physical condition of Sardar began to take a turn for the worse about the middle of November 1950, when he had perforce to spend more time in bed. His last public engagement, as far as I remember, was on 9 November when he attended a public meeting to commemorate the *Nirvan* (attainment of salvation) of Rishi Dayanand, founder of the Arya Samaj. At that meeting he spoke with both feeling and conviction and paid a warm tribute to the great work of regeneration of Hinduism which the Swamiji had performed. He said, 'In India wherever there has been an encroachment on the ancient religion some great man has always come to its rescue. It was at a critical period in the life of the Hindu religion that Swamiji's river of knowledge began to flow to enrich the world.' He referred to the Swamiji's contribution in ridding Hinduism of a great deal of superstition and in rousing the conscience of the people against untouchability. He described Swamiji's service to the Hindu community in the following words:

> Swamiji's efforts led to the stoppage of the conversion of lakhs of people to other faiths. Swamiji also worked hard to bring back to the Hindu fold those who had been forcibly converted to other faiths. Forcible conversions are against the tenets of the Hindu religion. This has been a boon to India. Swamiji removed the clouds of doubt in which the Hindu religion was enveloped and made it shine like the sun.

Bringing the subject of the occasion into contemporary importance he observed :

> Today the world is passing through a crisis. A fierce war is going on in Korea, as if between two big camps. There is now the fear of a third world war. India was partitioned and you have suffered the most. On the other

> side, a peaceful country like Tibet has been invaded and it may not survive. We did not think this would happen. We were maintaining friendly relations with China. Some other countries even started misunderstanding us on account of these friendly relations. But China did not accept our advice. We do not know what will be the outcome of this. Tibet is a religious minded country. There has been no aggression from its side. But when one is intoxicated with power, one does not realise what one is doing. We tell people not to use force of arms. If armed conflict occurs at one place, it spreads elsewhere. The whole border becomes exposed to danger. We should, therefore, be vigilant.
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> Swamiji taught that we should shed the fear complex and be united so as to be able to protect ourselves. Gandhiji also said that our non-violence should not be that of cowards. India is a three-year old infant. Fires are raging on all sides. We should be fearless and protect our country, by non-violence if possible but by violence if necessary. The present times demand unity amongst us, unity born of love and goodwill, so that we may effectively protect our country.

His observations show how much his mind was preoccupied with the nature and potentialities of the Tibetan crisis.

After this public function, he was to have attended a meeting convened on the occasion of the death anniversary of Lala Lajpat Rai the 'Lion of the Punjab' on 17 November 1950. By this time however, his chronic intestinal trouble had worsened. His weakness which was already causing concern became even more pronounced due to the hard work and resultant strain. He could not therefore attend the meeting and conveyed his inability to Tandon. The latter insisted on a message for which also Sardar showed his reluctance but Tandon would not be appeased. Sardar then asked me to draft a message in Hindi. What was unusual was that he could not even give me directions as to what I should say. I therefore, had to make a solo effort which I read out to him. He accepted the draft without any change. I reproduce below the English translation of that message:

> There have been few leaders and patriots in history to match Lala Lajpat Rai in influence, fearlessness and devotion. He was rightly known during his life time as the Lion of Punjab because of his bravery, fervour and strength. These qualities he combined with tenderness of heart, a liberal outlook and a penchant for truth. I remember his great qualities and feel sorry that there is none today to fill his place. How much we need him today can be judged from the present state of the country.
>
> There are people amidst us today who forget their own defects and try to correct other people's defects. There are many who find it expedient to hide their trespasses by joining the multitudes crying 'thief, thief'. They forget their own past and try to invent a history for others. Perhaps they depend on the short memory of the populace to forget the facts and accept their version. They forget that the masses have their own ways and means

of assessing every individual. No one can rise in public estimation by singing one's own praises. A man's smallness becomes evident in his trends and inclinations when he tries to cloak his selfishness in a garb of benevolence. An atmosphere prevails in India today in which futile criticism of others and attacks on other people's ideals and motives are equated with service of the nation.

I have no doubt about the fate of those who are thus striking at the very root of national life. Nor is there any place for doubt. I am confident that the nation's heart is safe and sound. Those who consider the people ignorant are deluding themselves. In a short time, the true and the false will be sifted out. The roar of a lion like Lala Lajpat Rai would have awakened the country quickly at such a juncture. His nerve and vigour would have created an atmosphere in which people could well understand their duty and act with the same devotion and affection as Lalaji did in his own lifetime. The scope for the service to the nation is not less in India today than it was before. Then we saw only one danger facing us—slavery. Today there are many dangers to face but I see few signs of the alertness and fearlessness with which we faced the previous danger. We have forgotten the big threats and got so involved in small pursuits that we run the risk of becoming too weak to fight the real threats. The country needs people of Lala Lajpat Rai's intrepedity and self-sacrifice to alert India against those threats and arouse a wave of enthusiasm to overcome the dangers.

I appeal to all of you to keep Lalaji's brilliant example before you, ponder on the situation today, and understand your duty and act accordingly.

Even though Sardar took to his bed and spent all his time at home, affairs of State still engaged him. Pandit Nehru, Rajaji, Rajendra Prasad, Cabinet and Congress colleagues and Chief Ministers continued to visit him and seek his advice and instructions on diverse matters. Notwithstanding the Nasik Session and the reconstitution of the Working Committee and every attempt on Sardar's and Tandon's part to accommodate Pandit Nehru's wishes, the latter continued to smart under his rebuff in the Presidential election. In matters concerning his own departments, Sardar was experiencing a more critical interest on the part of Pandit Nehru than was formerly the case. His ears were more open to complaints about its functioning with the result that correspondence between them had ceased to be as pleasant and constructive as before. Though when they talked to each other, Pandit Nehru and Sardar could do so without either of them getting into a temper, the previous warmth and openness were absent; instead there was an ominous frigidity and reserve about them. I sensed this deteriorating situation all the time and broached the matter sometimes to Sardar. But Sardar said that he had known Pandit Nehru for thirty years; he had always been temperamental and a spoilt child; he had always got what he wanted ; this was the second time he had failed (the first was his failure to get Rajaji elected as President) and he was naturally feeling the blow; in course of time it would pass off and if

it did not, he would have to deal with it.

Sometime before Sardar took to his bed, an event of some significance but rather strange in character had occurred. I have already referred to the close and intimate relationship between Sardar and Pandit Dwarka Prasad Misra who was at that time Home Minister in Madhya Pradesh. Misra was a friend of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai also and they took each other into confidence Rafi Ahmad Kidwai told Misra during one of his visits to Delhi how great was his admiration for Sardar's achievements and the qualities of his head and heart and that despite the past he would like to come near him. But he added significantly, 'Sardar Saheb would not probably like to see my face even'. Misra told him that this was not a fact, that Sardar was always generous to his opponents and that he knew that Sardar was appreciative of some of Rafi Ahmad kidwai's qualities. Kidwai seemed happy at this disclosure. Misra then asked him if he wanted his sentiments to be conveyed to Sardar. He said he did.

Misra came to see Sardar and mentioned this conversation; after he had seen him, he took me aside and told me all about it and wanted my reactions. I was always an admirer of Rafi Ahmad Kidwai even though I did not like some of his activities and some of his ways of doing things. I told Misra that it would be a good thing if Sardar and Kidwai came together. Much of what the latter was doing administratively would be to Sardar's liking; as regards many other things to which objection could be taken, Sardar could provide a corrective. Misra was, however, hesitant to mention it to Sardar again and after some persuasion I agreed to bell the cat. But we both agreed that it should be done when Sardar was in a relaxed mood and I thought he would be receptive to the idea. Accordingly, one fine morning when Sardar was basking in the sun on his lawn and he and I were alone, I mentioned the matter to him as tactfully and diplomatically, as I could. Half amused, Sardar listened to me and after a brief pause turned to me and said, 'I agree with you that it would be a good thing but answer two questions, Do you not think that if this happened I would not be accused of suborning the loyalty of Panditji's most loyal supporter ? And do you think I can pay Rafi's price which, despite whatever improved relationship this might bring about, would still remain for a residue of his activities ? I saw the meaning of it all.

Sardar did not wish to be accused of intrigue in weaning away from Pandit Nehru one who was known to be his staunchest worker and felt that his acceptance of Rafi Ahmad Kidwai's gesture would mean that he would have to give him some freedom to oblige his friends and otherwise condone or connive some of his 'irresponsible' behaviour. Sardar had information about his doings in U.P. and his various attempts to sow the seeds of discord and dissidence in other States particularly Punjab, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. He thought that all these features which had become his second nature could not be shed altogether. I conceded the validity of his objections which were expressed through these questions and conveyed it to Misra, who also realised the force of Sardar's objections and acknowledged the nobility of Sardar's

approach to what would probably have been a god-sent opportunity to weaken Pandit Nehru's hold over the Congress organisation. Mishra conveyed Sardar's reaction to Rafi Ahmad Kidwai as tactfully as he could. The latter took the reply in a good spirit and expressed a desire to meet Sardar all the same. This was done and both met in a cordial atmosphere in which the political controversies of the past seemed to be matters of just the day-before-yesterday.

During this period, Nepal affairs also came up for occasional review between Pandit Nehru and Sardar. Sardar, as I have stated earlier, was not in sympathy with Pandit Nehru's support to the externally inspired revolt organised against the Rana regime. He had established contact with the leading lights of the Rana party who were prepared to turn over a new leaf. Sardar felt that with the Chinese situation assuming a potentially dangerous phase, it was better to solve the problem of Nepal through friendly understanding with the Ranas who were within rather than trust the èmigrè Rana and certain disgruntled elements who were without. In any case, he thought that King Tribhuvan could not be even the last person to bring about a revolution in that semi-feudal area with a predominance of backward people. Pandit Nehru would not, however think of a compromise with the Ranas and placed his trust in the King and his anti-Rana attitudes ignoring the human incapacity which governed the king even in his few sober moments. In retrospect it seems to me that in that approach were sown the seeds of future differences with Nepal with the result that we gradually lost it as a staunch ally which would look to us for support in its own existence.

Sardar's health was, in the meantime, taking a turn for the worse and the doctors were feeling helpless. It seemed from their anxious faces and whispered undertones that they did not expect a recovery. After a meeting on 4 December in his house, his health got even worse and the doctors decided that he should visit Bombay so that further investigations and treatment could be undertaken. Sardar had definitely lost weight, he was feeling a loss of strength, he did not sleep well, his face and feet were showing signs of oedema. The decision to fly him to Bombay was taken and it was clear that it would mean either prolonged absence or no return. Consequently, there were confabulations about the arrangements. Rajagopalachari was there to look after the affairs in his absence but he declined ; finally the understanding with Sardar was that while he would still be able to retain control over policy and important matters, the day-to-day supervision would be exercised by Pandit Nehru and Gopalaswamy Ayyangar.

After making all the arrangements, we fixed 12 December as the date on which Sardar should leave. Sardar left in an IAF pressurised Dakota which had been specially constructed for his convenience, in addition to Bharat Airways pressurised Dakota plane. Both had to be called into service. Sardar, Maniben and the doctors left by the IAF Dakota while I left with Rameshwar Das in the regular service plane. We reached Bombay first and waited for the IAF plane to arrive. It came after a few minutes. Sardar did not stand the journey well and alighted somewhat exhausted by the strain of the

journey. I did not like the expression on his face; it seemed so care-worn and haggard. I could not help turning aside and shedding a few silent tears. B.G. Kher and Morarji Desai who were at the airport also welcomed him but were taken aback by his appearance. We left Birla House and he was comfortably lodged there in his usual room while I occupied my small room on a side not far from his. Curiously, he had a good restful night and felt somewhat better the next morning. The day passed off fairly well but the night was again troublesome. He had to be given an extra dose of sleeping pills. But before that, in the morning as if he had a premonition of what was coming, he called me and said that he wanted to have a quiet one hour with me in the afternoon and that if I had made any appointments I was to cancel them. I had given time to Kasturbhai Lalbhai of Ahmedabad and as directed by Sardar had to cancel it. Later I felt sorry for him because thereby he, a life long friend and a devoted adherent, was denied the last chance of seeing him. The day wore on with the doctors trying one thing or the other but the kidneys were now giving way and they were afraid that uraemia might set in later and he would then be beyond help.

In the meantime, Sardar had received a letter from Pandit Nehru expressing concern about his health and hoping that the change would do him good. In the letter he also conveyed to Sardar that he would not have to deal with his departmental affairs but that the States Ministry would be looked after by Gopalaswamy Ayyangar and Home Ministry by himself. Knowing full well that the arrangements would hurt Sardar in the current state of health with a weakening heart and progressive failure of the kidneys, I decided in consultation with Maniben, not to take the risk of showing him the letter. I am convinced that thereby I prevented Sardar from harbouring the last feelings of anguish and distress at Pandit Nehru's attitude with the possibility of an aggravation of his condition.

In the afternoon at about 4 o'clock, Sardar and I sat by ourselves—not even Maniben was present as she was otherwise preoccupied—and had a little more than forty-five minutes of personal communication. Sardar started by describing how he broke away from Gandhiji at the time of the Cabinet Mission discussions. He said that he felt convinced that if the Congress had not accepted the Plan with its own interpretation, a League Ministry would have been installed with Jinnah gathering together the flotsam and jetsam of the constituents of India's political life would have done incalculable harm to India's future. The country would have rapidly slided into civil war which probably would have resulted in the imposition of a Military regime backed by conservative British elements. He genuinely felt that the transfer of power as contemplated was an opportunity for the Congress to stem the rot and to help to build the future. I queried as to how he would have done it with a weak centre and League elements in Parliament. He said that he hoped that the country would have gradually come round to the need of a strong centre; in any case the States would have been free to build up their own area both socially and economically. He then referred to the dangers which faced us before Independence and how they had been avoided. In this

he acknowledged Lord Mountbatten's contribution in the integration of States, in the Partition Council and in the Emergency Cabinet and above all in keeping Pandit Nehru generally on the right track. He dwelt on the cordial relations which subsisted between himself and Pandit Nehru right up to Tandon's election, with a short break immediately after Independence. He said, 'Jawaharlal himself is one of the nicest persons to work with or work under; he is amenable; but the difficulty comes when he lends his ears to men like Rafi, Maulana or Mridula.' This led me to ask him about his preference for Tandon. He said, 'Did you not see what happened at Jaipur Congress? He had the ear of the Congressmen and was heard in pin-drop silence while a stalwart like Govind Ballabh Pant was not heard at all. How could I have agreed to such a powerful support being stifled because of prejudice? Besides, I was certain that Tandon would not act irresponsibly and I have been proved right.' I said 'But the credit for it goes to you'; he smiled.

He then summed up what he had been able to achieve. The danger of Balkanisation had gone; India was one as it never was before. We had a strong centre and with all the resources we had and the peace we had secured, there was no reason why with realistic planning and united effort we should not be able to build a future of economic prosperity. But he added, 'I sometimes wonder if the unity of the country would be preserved in the manner it had been achieved and if it would be utilised to make the country strong and prosperous.' In this context, he referred to the need for arresting demobilisation and looking after demolished soldiers, sailors and airmen in a manner so that in an emergency they not only could be called back but would also be willing and happy to come. He referred to the time we were wasting in idle talk, the little sense of or regard for priorities, and our preocccupations more with ideals and ideologies than practical aims and methods to achieve them.

I then referred to the fact that he had built up and preserved a disciplined organisation which on the whole had responded well to his demands on them. He said more or less as follows, 'You do not know them as well as I do. I have seen them and studied them over the last thirty years. They will applaud you and follow you as long as it suits them. When you are no longer there or when you cease to occupy the chair they will turn their face on you. They have more capacity to talk than to think.' In this context he referred to how people had forgotten Gandhiji already and were using his name to serve their own ends.

He then referred to the dangers that faced the country, particularly the Chinese menace and said 'I wrote a detailed letter to Jawaharlal on the subject but he preferred to be guided by Panikkar from Peking rather than by Bajpai and me from here. Why? Because he preferred make-believe to advice based on judgement and experience.' He wound up by saying that he had been disillusioned particularly towards the end of his days. He hoped and prayed that God would not desert us and would endow us with wisdom and we would heed warnings before it is too late.

This is more or less the substance of our talk. The forty-five minutes of conversation tired him out and he felt exhausted. When I saw this, I advised

him to rest in bed which he did. The night of 13 December, however, proved to be a disturbed night. Even the sleeping draught did not give him the usual restful sleep and the next morning he woke up tired and looking and feeling worse than the previous day. Throughout the day of 14 December he continued to get worse; medication did not yield the results hoped for and it seemed that symptoms of uraemia were setting in. The condition of the heart had considerably weakened and the kidneys were not properly or adequately functioning. By the evening he was definitely much worse and we had to put him in an oxygen tent. The usual sleeping doses were administered but they did not have any effect for some hours and had to be repeated.

He then lapsed into a slumber but was breathing very heavily. For a time I felt that he had lost consciousness. The pulse was feeble and the doctors (Nathubhai Patel, Gilder and Mishra) who were frequently watching him, and their extreme anxiety was visible on their countenance. During the rest of the night, we were practically living from moment to moment and watching over him anxiously and apprehensively. Near about dawn (about 7 a.m.) however, he woke up and asked for me and Maniben. For a brief moment we thought that he had revived but after he gave us a look full of affection and love, he lapsed into unconsciousness. After an hour he began to gasp for breath and within a few minutes he breathed his last.

Earlier, I had rung up Delhi and informed the Prime Minister that Sardar's life was coming to a close but when I saw signs of a revival, I rushed back to inform him that it did not seem as bad as I had originally conveyed to him. But as the end came I rushed back again to the telephone and told him sobbingly that Sardar was no more. The light that had shone so strongly for all these years had been extinguished for ever. Pandit Nehru sounded stricken with sorrow and grief. After the conversation I returned to Sardar's side. The whole atmosphere was one of darkest gloom even though in the distance the sun was coming up and throwing its rays to cover the entire scence before our eyes. This contrast between sunshine and shadow seemed to overwhelm me and I retired to a corner to give vent to my sorrow in isolation and solitude. During the few minutes that I did so, I could not help recalling the last discussion I had with Sardar and the burden of sorrow and disillusionment which seemed to weigh on his heart then; it seemed to me that he carried that burden with him to the other world and I was wondering whether his soul was really resting in peace and whether all the patriotic fervour that he carried in his mind and that dominated him throughout his life could ever allow him to rest in peace as time went on.

The news of Sardar's death spread like wild fire and a large concourse began to gather to pay their last homage to the departed leader who was a pillar of strength and a beaconlight of hope and confidence to the millions of his countrymen. The arrangements for the funeral were in Government's hands. The Parliament met at the usual hour and Pandit Nehru made a very touching reference to Sardar, an extract of which I reproduce below :

It is a great story, as all of us know, as the whole country knows, and history will record it in many pages and call him the Builder and Consolidator of the New India and will say many things about him. But perhaps to many of us here he will be remembered as a great captain of our forces in the struggle for freedom and as one who gave us sound advice in times of troubles as well as in moments of victory as a friend and colleague on whom one could invariably rely as a tower of strength which revived wavering hearts when we were in trouble. We shall remember him as a friend and a colleague and comrade above all, and I who have sat here on this bench side by side with him for these several years will feel rather forlorn and a certain emptiness will steal upon me when I look to his empty bench.

We were receiving messages from Delhi from time to time and we were particularly distressed to learn that efforts were being made not to allow people from coming to Bombay in order to be present at Sardar's funeral. We were told that Ministers were being discouraged from coming and that the Governors who had made enquiries had been told to stick to their posts. Apparently this was in compliance with Pandit Nehru's exhoitation in his speech in Parliament which was couched in the following words :

I can say little more on this occasion, My colleague, Mr. Rajagopalachari and I are going almost immediately, to pay our last tribute and homage to him in Bombay. I understand that the President has also decided to go to Bombay immediately, and the Speaker, Sir, went early this morning. I have no doubt that many of my colleagues and hon'ble members of this House occasion to pay this last tribute, but I feel that he, magnificent worker that he was, would not have liked us to leave our work and just go in large numbers to Bombay at this moment. So I have asked my colleagues to stay here, except for Mr. Rajagopalachari, who was perhaps amongst all of us here the oldest of Sardar Patel's colleagues and comrades.

In the meantime, we ourselves had a discussion as to where Sardar's body should be cremated. There was a strong feeling that he should be cremated at Chawpatty. In fact, the advocates of this proposal had secured Dahyabhai Patel's consent but Maniben and I were opposed to it in view of Sardar's declared wish that he should be cremated at the same cremation place at which his late brother Vithalbhai Patel's body had been consigned to the ashes. B. G. Kher and Morarji Desai agreed with us. In addition to it being Sardar's wish, they also felt that at Chawpatty the crowd would become unmanageable as had happened at Gandhiji's cremation ceremony. Finally this view prevailed and the funeral procession was organised so that it would reach the Sonapur Cremation Ground by sundown. It was a state funeral and consequently excellent arrangements were made. As the funeral procession marched from Birla House to the cremation ground, the streets were thronged with people who had come to pay their last respects to Sardar; and all the houses *en*

route were full of people at all points of vantage including balconies and terraces. Millions watched silently and mournfully with sorrow and grief as Sardar was taken to his last resting place which was also the ground where the eternal fire would consume his mortal frame and reduce it to bones and ashes. As we laid the body to rest and as Dahyabhai Patel lit the funeral pyre, there was a universal outburst of sobs and cries. Despite the injunctions to the contrary many Ministers including Kakasaheb Kalelker, N. V. Gadgil and Satya Narain Sinha who were so close to Sardar, and Governors including Mangaldas Pakwasa and his Highness the Maharaja of Bhavnagar who was then Governor of Madras were present. President Rajendra Prasad, despite hints to the contrary, was present as also Rajaji and Pandit Nehru. After the fire had consumed Sardar's mortal frame and we began to disperse, a question arose as to who should address those who were present. Pandit Nehru it seems wanted Rajaji to say something but ultimately it was Rajendra Prasad who addressed the meeting in appropriate words. We then dispersed to return to our respective places. I tried to sleep away the night but the sad events of the day kept recurring in my mind.

Arrangements for the immersion ceremony presented a big problem. But I was fortified in the knowledge that Govind Ballabh Pant and my very good friend B.N. Jha, the Chief Secretary of U.P., could be depended upon not only to give me assistance but also dedicatedly to participate in the ceremony. I also knew of the hold Sardar had on the Administration and Police Services of the U.P.

We informed all concerned about the arrangements and we were told that not only would very distinguished people from Delhi be going to Allahabad but many of the Governors would also be coming. The then Governor of U.P., Homi Mody, a good friend and admirer of Sardar, volunteered to offer hospitality to the distinguished visitors, and the Government House near Alfred Park was virtually converted into a hotel for the purpose. We left by air for Allahabad on the morning of 29 December and were received at the airport by President Rajendra Prased who had come earlier, the Governor and his family, Govind Ballab Pant and his colleagues, the Chief Secretary, the Inspector General of Police and all the important officials of Allahabad along with a big crowd of people. The procession was arranged in a similar manner to Gandhiji's mourning ceremony and a huge concourse running into two or three lakhs followed us right through to the Sangam where the ashes were transferred to the Army Ducks. Thereafter, we took the ashes in a procession of boats to the confluence of the three rivers and after due ceremony consigned all the bones and a part of the ashes to the waters. As we did so, I could not help feeling that my last physical contact with Sardar was thus over and Providence had taken away from me all that remained of his body leaving his memories and spirit to keep me company for the rest of my days. The latter has been literally true for I cannot think of any sizable period of my life since then when I have not remembered him or thought of him. In fact, for the next five years I observed a fast on Friday, which was the day of his death and on his birth and death anniversaries, not merely to show my

affection and reverence for him but to assign days on which I could make a special point of thinking of him and his great work for the country.

During the momentous and hectic days that I had spent with him I seldom had the opportunity of reflecting, with my historical sense, on the great tasks on which he was engaged. During my journey from the Sangam, back to the sanctity and solitude of Government House, I had occasion to indulge in some flashbacks of those days. One dominant feature throughout emerged and that was the figure of a giant taking everything in his stride, imbued with a complete sense of dedication to the country and with a patriotic fervour that made him think but lightly of his own sorrow and strain. He gave to the country his best at a time when the fullness of his life past and his own health, could have justifiably led him to spend his days in peace contentment and perhaps contemplation. Neither amongst the living nor amongst the dead could I find such an example of selfless dedication and devotion over such a long period to the mighty tasks which had to be handled in the interests of the country which had attained independence in his own lifetime but late in his days when the sunset could not be far off. That sunset had come perhaps sooner than one hoped but at least for the time being it seemed still to retain the glory of the sunrise. I need hardly say, however, that the darkshadows of the twilight were not long in overtaking that glory and what I experienced subsequently over the years recalled to my mind his words pregnant with wisdom, with which he summed up the tasks that he had successfully performed, the things that remained to be done in the future and the failings of his own fellow-workers.

After our return to Delhi we came to a parting of the ways. Maniben and Dahyabhai Patel left Delhi while I had to seek solace in a crushing solitude. V. P. Menon noticed the change and advised me to take a brief respite away from Delhi. I accordingly left Delhi for Calcutta and spent a fortnight at Birla House with B. M. Birla, his son Ganga Prasad and his nephews K. K. Birla and B. K. Birla, all of whom were then living in their Ballygunge mansion which has now been converted into a museum. They not only took care of me but showered on me affection to a degree that I could not have experienced in Delhi. In their company, I drowned my sorrow in discussions and diversions and after I had fully steadied myself I returned to my post of duty in the Ministry of States which was placed in the charge of Shri Gopalaswamy Ayyangar. It did not need any effort to adapt myself to the change. That, and the subsequent events in my service are another story which I hope to tell some day. For the time being, I must take leave of my readers in the hope that what I have said in these pages will enable them to recall the times through which we passed in perhaps the most critical phase of recent history, assess the course of development that took place and appreciate the great contribution which Sardar made in giving the history of his country during that eventful and crucial period, a turn which not only helped the country to attain independence even though at a big price, to solve the problems of peace, security and integration that confronted it, and to settledown to the essential process of constitution-making but also to consolidate itself and to lay the foundations of its future progress.

Twenty-five

Sardar and His Contemporaries

SARDAR'S ACTIVE public life spanned a period of nearly fifty years. His professional life covered only a period of less than twenty years. He passed his childhood and adulthood in needy circumstances. His initial education was delayed; he left school well after the normal age of school-leaving. He could not pursue his education beyond matriculation and consequently had to pass his pleadership examination with borrowed books, reading under street lamps. Even at school he had given glimpses of ready wit, his resistance to teacher's tyranny, his leadership of students in an election contest, his determination to see that a defeated candidate is made to live up to his vow even at the cost of his moustache, and his guts in overcoming the compulsions of poverty and domestic handicaps; yet these were not sufficient to indicate in the peasant-child and growing adult the beginning of the coming man. His personality was being built up under the influence of heredity, his circumstances, his environment and his own inner qualities but Vallabhbhai the peasant-worker of 1917-21, could hardly have given an indication of what was to come; the leader of Bardoli of 1928, and the Sardar of 1939-42 and of 1946-50. However, no student of his life can fail to detect in the former the foundations of the Man of Destiny that he developed to be, or discern some dim shape of things to come.

His early upbringing in a rural joint-family—perhaps the best school of discipline, self-restraint, teamwork, and fellowship in the world—prepared the way for such instances of self-denial and self-sacrifice as the meek submission to his elder brother appropriating his travel arrangements for a sojourn abroad to himself, the despatch of his own wife to her parents' place in order to give peace and comfort to his own elder brother's wife, and the stoic self-discipline with which he pocketed the telegram conveying his own wife's death until he had discharged his duty to his client. But the sharpness of his intellect in conducting cases, the fearlessness and thoroughness with which he guarded the interests of his clients, the manner in which even in those days of the supremacy of British authority he inspired fear among the erring magistracy or judiciary, and the skill and ability with which he cross-examined his witnesses came not in any natural course of development but as a result of time and opportunity revealing the inner man.

His trip abroad, during which he conquered the prolonged effects of seasickness by refusing to submit to it, refrained from the normal habit of taking to drink; walked miles from his lodging to the Bar Library, sustaining himself

during the day on a jar of milk and bread and butter, and finally by dint of labour and intelligence distinguished himself in the Bar examination, to my mind formed a turning point in the build-up of his personality. He returned in appearance and habits a radically different man from what he was when he left the shores of India in a comparatively small boat which tossed itself through the mountainous billows of the monsoon seas. He took to European ways in no less an aristocratic manner than his elder Pandit Motilal Nehru or his contemporary, Mohamed Ali Jinnah. His refusal of the offer of a judicial appointment coming from no less a person than the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court showed not only his sense of self-respect and dignity but also high measure of self-confidence and love of independence. His life in Ahmedabad as a leading member of the Bar and his friendship with the leading light of that city of whom the late G. V. Mavalankar (affectionately called Dada-Saheb) was undoubtedly the closest, showed him to be not only a lover of style and refinement but also a popular social figure. Feared at home, he was nevertheless a loving father, an affectionate brother and a genuine friend worthy of being fastened to his companions 'with hoops of steel'.

It was this Vallabhbhai who, after first resisting the temptation in a somewhat contemptuous manner, fell under the magic spell and charm of Gandhiji's personality. Having successfully passed through the baptism of fire he soon won his mentor's confidence and trust and began to work on his own under the latter's vigilant eye both from far and near. The change came over him swiftly but surely. He took the plunge and never felt out of depth. Whatever he did, he did with thoroughness, competence and conviction. wherever he went he breathed confidence and won loyalty. He welded his Workers into a team and ensured complete discipline and strict obedience to authority. Truth and non-violence were for him not mere policies but creeds. Never was promotion in the hierarchy so rapid and so established. His own mentor's tribute to him merits consideration. At the end of the Kheda Satyagraha Gandhiji referred to Vallabhbhai in the following words:

> A leader's skill is judged by the competence in selecting his assistants for the execution of his plans. Many people were prepared to follow my advice but I could not make up my mind as to who should be my deputy commander. I then thought of Vallabhbhai. I must admit that when I met Vallabhbhai first, I could not help wondering who this stiff-looking person was, and whether he would be able to do what I wanted. But the more I came to know him, the more I realized that I must secure his help. Vallabhbhai too has come to the conclusion that although he has a flourishing legal practice today and is doing very important work in the municipality, he must become a whole time public worker and serve his country. So he has taken the plunge. If it were not for his assistance, I must admit that this campaign would not have been carried through so successfully.

The bond of teacher and disciple which had been forged between them in Ahmedabad was strengthened in Kheda, and Vallabhbhai thus became not

only a follower but a confidant of Gandhiji in regard to all matters and issues pertaining to Gujarat. It was in that capacity that he dealt with the labour strike in Ahmedabad, thereby setting a precedent for labour-employer understanding and relationship, which eventually led to foundation of healthy trade unionism not only in that city but gradually throughout the country. Unfortunately for the country, however, that precedent exhausted itself within a few years of Independence, when its basic principles were gradually sacrificed at the alter of politics or transient success; he also organised an anti-Rowlatt Act agitation and finally joined the Non-Cooperation Movement and organized its various activities in Gujarat. But the most important scene of his activities was the municipality, in the affairs of which he defied British bureaucracy with consummate skill, masterly organisation and great resourcefulness. During those days of the supremacy of the British Raj that achievement has the merit of a successful epic struggle. What is more, during Gandhiji's absence due to imprisonment after a historic trial, Vallabhbhai shot into prominence on his own and though throughout he worked under Gandhiji's shadow and in his name he gave distinct proof of his own self-reliance and self-confidence. He also provided ample evidence of being a man of action rather than a purveyor of words. His own mind and attitude are typified in the following words he spoke at the Gaya Congress when he opposed entry into the Legislature:

> I am not a leader; I am a soldier. I am the son of a peasant and do not believe that we can gain independence by merely talking. We shall not be able to fight the Government on its own ground. Once we enter the Lagislatures, the people will lose their enthusiasm for independence of the people. It will indeed be ruinous to the Congress. It is only when the Congress announced its policy of non-cooperation that it began to be supported by agriculturists, labourers and women. That is so because it is only such activity which gives scope for participating in the national struggle and for making sacrifices. The Government knew well before the reforms, the nature of the people with whom it had to deal. The reforms were drawn up with reference to their strong and their weak points. Even if you conducted your campaign for a hundred years, through the Legislatures, you will not get independence.

Nothing was more demonstrative of his courage, standing and self-confidence than the manner in which he, along with Rajaji and Rajen Babu, withstood the onslaughts and met the challenge of such eminent stalwarts and legal luminaries as Deshbandhu C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru. Vallabhbhai's life was passing through with the speed characteristic of one who throughout realised the value of time and appreciated the virtues of economy of words and plenitude of action. This period provided him with opportunities increasingly to discover and reveal himself. His clean methods in controversies, his habit of calling a spade a spade, his directness, his determination, his rigid adherence to the line of action already decided upon, his organising ability, his

control over audiences and workers and his firm belief in Gandhiji's policies though not necessarily in all his philosophies came fully to the fore during the period of 1920-23. It was also during this period that he transformed himself into the common brand of a Congress leader in his appearance but he remained a Swadeshi in his style of living. He had also shown amazing versatility in dealing with the various situations with which he had to deal, mixing pragmatism in methods with rigidity in principles.

Hitherto Vallabhbhai's light was shedding its lustre only in his own Gujarat where within five years he had been able to acquire a dominating position in public life. But deprived of Gandhiji's shelter and individualistic tendencies so characteristic of Gujaratis coming to the fore in his absence, Vallabhbhai had to contend with many a discontented element. He did not try to ride roughshod over them but endeavoured to convince them through appeals to their reason that constructive work rather than civil disobedience pointed the way to the solution of many of their difficulties. He eventually succeeded in his objective by supplementing his methods of persuasion with some tactical manoeuvres. This was typical of the man; though he had the reputation of strength he realised that like the power of the sword, strength and elasticity together held the key to achievement in human affairs.

Equipped with these virtues which he had inherited, developed or imbibed, he stepped out of his home province to uphold the dignity of the national flag in far-off Nagpur. The Congress upheld that dignity with a spirit of dedication and devotion. Its main song expressed the hope that the flag would eternally fly, that it should breathe the spirit of courage, love and universality and that even if it involved the sacrifice of life, its dignity and sanctity should be upheld and preserved. When, therefore, the Government of Central Provinces challenged this right, it met with stiff resistance. The usual story of processions, dispersal and arrests repeated itself until Jamnalal Bajaj, the leader of the struggle was arrested. Vallabhbhai was then assigned the duty of conducting the struggle; he again took to tactical moves and got the Lagislature to pass a resolution in opposition to Government's line. He followed it up with a speech which contained no stings and thus compelled the Government to retrace its steps. In subsequent developments, gradually he completely outmanoeuvred the officialdom and vindicated himself and his brother Vithalbhai fully. In some ways his methods were parallel to those which he successfully followed in dealing with the officialdom over Ahmedabad municipal affairs. He improved upon those methods in dealing with a situation which had repercussions in the open. All these lessons he combined and again improved upon, when he dealt with the punitive tax situation in Borsad with such satisfactory results that he was greeted by Gandhiji after his release as 'the King of Borsad'. When Gandhiji familiarised himself with the developments that had taken place in his absence in jail, he publicly expressed his admiration in words which for a word-economist like Gandhiji meant much more than they actually conveyed. He said:

> The last two years of their history should make every Gujarati feel proud;

and what makes Gujarat proud of itself should also be gratifying to India. Our activities are such that if they benefit one province they cannot but react to the advantage of the country as a whole; and so the advance made by Gujarat is in fact an advance made by India.

The Satyagraha struggle at Borsad was in many ways superior to that at Kheda. The latter was merely a vindication of the honour of the people. My fast detracted from the victory of the Ahemdabad Mill workers, for the fast did bring to bear unfair pressure on the mill-owners. In Borsad, however, there was a complete victory for Satyagraha; honour was vindicated and the object was achieved after a straight struggle.

Let no one think that the victory was achieved because circumstances were favourable. We may congratulate the Governor of the day for accepting the justice of our cause, but the question is, had he been hard-hearted would he have been able to resist the pressure of the Satyagraha Movement ? circumstances become favourable if those engaged in a good cause are governed by fine and just instincts. It is the Satyagrahi's duty to convert his opponent into a friend and to create the right moral atmosphere.

If Gujarat had rested on its oars after Borsad, no one would have blamed her. But for the Satyagrahi there is no rest. His rest comes from moving on from one task, when completed, to another. Satyagraha involves self-knowledge, and Borsad gave the people that knowledge of themselves which enabled them to see that the location of punitive policy among themselves was due, to some extent at any rate, to their own shortcomings. And when one sees a defect in oneself, it becomes easier to detect other defects also. So the task that the people of Borsad have now undertaken is the one of self-purification. Such a task is more valuable and more difficult than that of merely fighting the Government. To fight and win against the Government is, as it were, a question of preparing the ground for cultivation. But constructive task of growing crops and harvesting them, i. e., of purifying and reforming themselves, is one far more difficult and calls for more time and patience. It is gratifying to know that this task is progressing satisfactorily. Success in it will constitute a truer measure of the quality, ability and fitness both of the volunteer workers as also of the people of Borsad.

Thus it was clear that Vallabhbhai has progressed far beyond his schooling in Gandhiji's philosophy and techniques; he had set on them his own individual stamp of clear exposition, adaptable strategy and skilful manoeuvres. Although he had acquired considerable self-confidence, he still owed everything to Gandhiji's inspiration and teachings and had such implicit trust in him as to have earned the description of his 'blind follower'. He gave him that obedience to the point of not even questioning his decisions even if he did not agree with them.

Hitherto, as a Congress leader, his forte lay in successfully bringing agitations to a close but when he was called upon to undertake the management of municipal affairs he showed remarkable ability in grasping its intricacies

and in organising administration and planning the ministration of civic needs on sound lines. His administrative genius demonstrated during those days was a precursor of the capacity for miracles which he was to bring out twenty years later. The floods of Gujarat provided the first opportunity of independence of action despite the proximity of Gandhiji. He so fully proved and justified himself that Gandhiji commended him in the following words:

> Shri Patel is a seasoned soldier and has no other occupation than that of service. He has an efficient agency of workers under him. Donors need, therefore, have no fear of wasteful expense or misappropriation. Properly audited accounts will be published, and all sums received will be acknowledged in the columns of Young India and if necessary Navajivan. Relief work will be done by him in collaboration with other agencies that may be brought into being. The chief thing is to send help. Let the donor choose his favourite and most trusted agency, but let him make sure that he sends not the least but the most he can.

But the days he spent in organising the peasants' revolt in Bardoli constituted at that time his finest hours uptodate. In organising and leading that revolt Vallabhbhai exhibited qualities of leadership which are rare in the annals of history. He organised not dozens or hundreds but thousands into a team; under his inspiration they all wrote poems of self-sacrifice which were unprecedented in the history of British rule in India; he brought the entire official machinery, hitherto all-powerful and invincible, to a halt and to its knees, he mastered the art of speaking to his audiences to such perfection that Mahadeva Desai wrote about him:

> I was with Vallabhbhai four years ago in Borsad. Thereafter too, I have heard him speak but never before had I heard such brilliance in his language or seen such indignation in his eyes. He seemed to suffer physical pain himself when he heard that the land of any peasant was forfeited. His words were full of the pain which one realised he felt personally at the hardships that were being inflicted. The villagers were moved by the extraordinary eloquence of his speeches and by his astonishingly simple yet effective popular similes and analogies.

I would like Mahadeva Desai in his own inimitable style to comment on the development of Vallabhbhai's personality. He wrote:

> It was in 1917-18 that Vallabhbhai came under Gandhiji's influence, and learnt from him the first principles of Indian nationalism—that the real India is to be found in the villages, and the peasant is at the head and centre of it, and that no scheme of freedom or progress of work would have any meaning unless it was framed with special, even exclusive, reference to him. I might say that this knowledge was brought out in Vallabhbhai rather than newly transmitted to him for it was there but deeply submerged. And

> the moment it was brought out it blossomed forth in him as perhaps it has hardly ever done in anybody else. What is the proper place of the agriculturist ? What is his condition ? What is the right way of regenerating him ? All that was made clear to Vallabhbhai by a shrewd observer (Gandhiji) who was not an agriculturist himself, and the pupil who had in him the blood of generation of agriculturistsunderstood the situation thoroughly and explained it to the people in a form in which the original observer could never have done. He took the first opportunity of serving the agriculturists during the Kheda land revenue campaign, pursued it further in Borsad, but the opportunity which came to him in Bardoli was incomparably the greatest.

So complete was his hold over the people that they began to greet Vallabhbhai as Sardar, an appellation on which Gandhiji applied an all-India stamp. In the tour of Tamilnadu that followed, Sardar further distinguished himself in fearlessly and forthrightly expounding the cause of liberalism in a province which had a long history of communal politics. The extent to which he had now occupied a position on the front bench of the country's politicians can be gauged from the following comparison which Mahadeva Desai made between Sardar and Lokamanya Tilak:

> On close association with Vallabhbhai and after watching his manner of speech, his smile and his laughter, his anger and his impatience, one cannot but be reminded of Tilak Maharaj. Both of them created an impression regarding themselves which was the exact opposite of what they in fact were. Both appeared at first sight to be arrogant, and stand-offish whereas in fact they were humble and gentle. Both gave the impression of being very complex, obstinate and stern, whereas in fact they were simple, straightforward and friendly.
>
> Tilak Maharaj became Lokamanya not because of his deep learning, but because of his wonderful ability to fight against injustice, because of his great sacrifices, because of his amazing ability to get at the root of people's troubles, and because of his ability to touch their hearts. Gujarat discovered during the Bardoli fight that all these qualities existed in Sardar to no less an extent. When Lokamanya stood in front of the public he did not parade before them his wisdom and his learning, but spoke to them in the language of the common man. If we look at the many speeches that Sardar made at Bardoli, we shall find in them the echoes of those historic speeches which Tilak Maharaj made in Ahmednagar and Belgaum.

Honours and invitations followed in quick succession. His tour of Bihar followed, and he visited Allahabad where he was the guest of Purshottam Das Tandon and a frequent visitor to Anand Bhawan. Sardar thus became a known all-India Personality and it was only natural that with this Bardoli achievement still fresh in the popular mind he should be in the thoughts of Congressmen for the Presidentship of the Lahore Congress. The mood of the country was reflected by Pandit Motilal Nehru in his letter to Gandhiji in

which he said 'Now comes the question of the Crown. I am clear that the hero of the hour is Vallabhbhai and the least we can do to appreciate this public service is to offer him the Crown. Failing him, I think that under all the circumstances Jawahar would be the next best choice.' Ten provinces favoured Gandhiji, five were for Sardar and three for Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. But destiny played its own pranks and after Gandhiji declined, Sardar by agreed arrangement followed suit and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru ascended the Congress *gaddi*. It was at that historic session that the Congress made a break with the past and accepted complete Independence in preference to Dominion Status as its goal.

Up to now, so far as Gujarat was concerned, its affairs were first the exclusive concern of Gandhiji, then they became the joint concern of Gandhiji and Sardar, but latterly they became almost the exclusive concern of Sardar, with Gandhiji providing occasional support. In the all-India field Gandhiji dominated the Congress until his imprisonment but after resisting for some time the challenge of Deshbandhu Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru, left the field to them on the political side for a few years, confining himself to constructive work. Both Sardar and Pandit Nehru kept themselves aloof from the legislative programme of the Congress and concerned themselves with the agrarian problems of their own respective provinces. Sardar stood firmly with Gandhiji but Pandit Nehru particularly after his sojourn in Soviet Russia began to assert himself and was the co-founder of the Independence of India League with the late Srinivasa Iyengar and Subhas Chandra Bose. He compromised his stand when he signed the Nehru Report which was based on Dominion Status but was relieved to find that it met with no response from the British Government and re-assumed the role of a crusader for Independence. It was at this time that Gandhiji launched the second struggle for freedom and while Sardar got the lead in going to jail, Pandit Nehru was equally in demand by the British authority. While Pandit Nehru spent his incarceration by himself, Sardar had the advantage of being in Ahmedabad and in closer touch with Gandhiji's activities. To my mind it is this aloofness in one case and closeness in the other which was responsible for the divergences in the attitudes of these two personalities to Gandhiji. Despite one or two serious differences between Sardar and Gandhiji before the final rift in views in 1946, the two held together all along but Pandit Nehru undoubtedly began to strike an independent line; this was clearly demonstrated at the time of the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931 when Sardar reconciled himself to it despite his opposition whereas Pandit Nehru burst into tears and would not be consoled until Gandhiji took him in his own hand. Even then the spirit of the Pact could linger with both only for a short time and there was no doubt that during Gandhiji's absence at the Round Table Conference both of them provided Lord Willingdon the Viceroy with a convenient excuse for launching repressive action. From now onwards the leading strings of the Congress were pulled not by Gandhiji alone but by Gandhiji, Sardar, Pandit Nehru and Rajendra Prasad, with Subhas Chandra Bose providing a meteoric interlude. It is round these personalities that Sardar's relationship with his contemporaries centres.

Sardar had begun to see matters somewhat differently from Gandhiji both before and after the Pact. In fact, the differences were somewhat open during its implementation and Gandhiji was compelled on more than one occasion to defend himself. But whatever the damage, it was repaired during the stay of both Gandhiji and Sardar in the Yeravada Jail for well-nigh sixteen months. Those months forged an unprecedented bond between Sardar and Gandhiji; his sense of humour, his carefree approach to life, his loving care and attention to Gandhiji, his crisp ways of dealing with contemporary figures and events and his irony are all vividly brought out in Mahadeva Desai's picturesque description. But the best tribute came from Gandhiji himself when he said :

> One of the greatest joys of my life was that I had an opportunity of staying in prison with the Sardar. I knew of his invincible courage and of his burning love for our country, but never before had I the good fortune of spending so much time with him as I was able to do during these sixteen months. His affection and love overwhelmed me and reminded me of my dear mother. I would never have imagined that he possessed such qualities of maternal affection. If I was in the slightest degree indisposed, he would be immediately by my side, and would pay personal attention to the smallest of my needs. He and my other colleagues must have decided among themselves that they should not let me do anything. I hope the Government will believe me when I say that whenever we discussed political matters, he was the one person who realized the difficulties of the Government. I shall never forget how concerned he was about the anxieties and troubles of the peasants of Bardoli and Kaira.

Sardar's humour did not flash without occasion nor did it flow in a constant steam. It was tinged with a sarcasm and irony that often made it effective against lengthy arguments or polemics. We find evidence of it not only during the illuminating passages between him and Gandhiji during his stay at Yeravada but also later. On one occasion, when Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya opposed a resolution moved by Sardar, the latter chided him saying that he had promised thousands of volunteers during the struggle but none had come, thereby demolishing any belief on the part of the audience that Madan Mohan Malaviya could deliver the goods. Barring Gandhiji, to whom he was prepared to make concessions when necessary, and Pandit Nehru with whom he would mostly talk on affectionate terms, he was brief, forthright and feerlessly critical both in his correspondence and in his discussions.

One result of the close familiarity which Gandhiji developed with Sardar was that he could leave it to Sardar to take the lead in Indian affairs, to speak on his behalf and to entrust to him functions that could not fit into Gandhiji's own programme. Consequently, Sardar took a prominent part in the Congress sessions, generally calling a spade a spade and driving his points home

with brevity, candour and, where necessary, sarcasm, and meeting the arguments of foes on equal terms. He spearheaded the election campaign of 1937 after he had been chosen at Gandhiji's suggetsion to be the Chairman of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee of the Congress Working Committee. As Member of the Election Committee, it fell to him to organise and raise funds for the elections to the Central and State Legislatures in 1937, as well as in 1945/46. The relevant papers of those hectic and critical days indicate what a grasp over detail Sardar had and how he applied his mind to each individual correspondent or individual claim with depth and understanding. He had often to wrestle with his own colleagues in one case or the other; he had sometimes to call to order lesser mortals who were nevertheless prominent in their own provinces. However, his general approach was realistic and objective.

His capacity for sizing up a situation almost instinctively and making quick decisions proved to be a great asset. His eternal vigilance, however, brought him in conflict not only with established authority but also his own Congressmen. He figured prominently in the well-known Nariman episode, in the Khare incident, on the question of release of political prisoners, the controversy over the restoration of forfeited lands in Bardoli and the appointment of Sir Louis Dane as Governor of Orissa. His firm handling of these issues, his stern exterior, his stiff attitude, and his adherence to decisions once made during all these developments, earned for him the popular designation of 'The Iron Man of India'. Similarly, the controversy of Congress Presidentship which had been won by Subhas Bose against the nominee of Gandhiji, Sardar took the lead on behalf of Gandhiji, and although Gandhiji accepted the election as his personal defeat, it was Sardar that Subhas Chandra Bose and his adherents regarded as their cheif adversary.

By 1939, therefore, Sardar's reputation as a leader of great eminence had been established. With Subhas Chandra Bose's exit, Gandhiji acquired greater control over the Congress and Sardar, as his reputed and acknowledged spokeman and lieutenant, became increasingly powerful. With the hold he had over the Provinces in which Congress Ministries were functioning, the prestige and power which he enjoyed as the organiser of elections and the awe he inspired as a result of the Khare and Nariman episodes and the forthright manner in which he dealt with opposition, there was no doubt that he developed an all-India image almost parallel with Pandit Nehru and close behind Gandhiji's. However, with his direct methods, his knowledge of men and matters, and his realism and firmness which people generally understood and appreciated, he was more sought after when it came to decision-making than either of the two leaders. It was not surprising, therefore, that when Great Britain declared war on Germany and India followed suit and Gandhiji stood for unconditional support to the British war-effort, the combination of Sardar and Pandit Nehru prevailed and the Congress Working Committee adopted the Nehru-Patel line.

Sardar's ready acquiescence in matters, a prominent feature of his life, was more a public stance than a private adjustment. In private discussion Sardar,

as was evidenced during his stay in Yeravada, expressed himself forthrighly and sometimes sarcastically on many issues which came up for discussion between them. In the episode of the Vidyapith Library, Sardar openly differed from Gandhiji and eventually had his way. Gandhiji's unquestioned leadership which had survived the open clashes during the Swaraj Party controversy had been subjected to a further challenge in 1934 at the Bombay Session when he decided to quit the Congress. Sardar was one of the few leaders who appreciated Gandhiji's stand though in the process he earned the following dubious compliment from Rajagopalachari:

> Gandhiji has many blind followers who will not see anything with their own eyes but only with his. But Sardar is in a class by himself as a blind follower. His eyes are clear and bright. He can see everything but he deliberately allows eyes to be blinkered and attempts to see only with Gandhiji's eyes.

Sardar's own position in Gujarat was challenged and for a time in 1935 it seemed that he would have to leave the Presidentship of the Provincial Congress Committee, but the storm blew over. However, these instances show that the Congress was passing through a phase of dissent and questioning and even leaders at the top were not immune from challenge to their authority. Sardar also ran into difficulties over his attitude to the Socialist Party. Sardar's view on Socialism and the Socialist Party are contained in the following extracts of his letter to Socialist leader, Rohit Mehta:

> The Socialists are not agreed even regarding the definition of Socialism. Different people put forward different meanings. There are 84 castes among the Brahmans whereas it would seem there are 85 different types of Socialists. That makes it somewhat difficult to express an opinion about Socialism.
>
> I am prepared to work with a Socialist or a Capitalist or with the followers of any 'ism' but only on one condition that no attempt is made to deceive me. The moment I find that to be case, I break away. I do not yet know who are the members of the Socialist Party in Gujarat. Some merely talk; with such persons I shall never be able to get on. Among the Socialists outside Gujarat, there are some who have made great sacrifices and are imbued with a real spirit of service. For them I have great respect. I say this in order to show that I have no particular hostility towards Socialists as such.

This attitude of his brought him into conflict with Pandit Nehru near about the Lucknow Session of 1935, of which the latter was the President. His regard and affection for Pandit Nehru were great. Sardar told me that before the Lahore Congress and after the withdrawal of his own candidature thereby paving the way for Jawaharlalji's election, for which Pandit Motilal Nehru expressed his gratefulness to him, the latter took him into confidence and

said, 'Do take him in your hand; he needs advice and support for he is emotional and apt to run into errors and inconsistencies; Sardar had this request impressed on his mind and heart. After Gandhiji's nomination of Pandit Nehru as his heir and successor and particularly in the light of Sardar's discussion with Gandhiji prior to his assassination, Sardar felt it his bounded duty to stand by his leadership. However, his feelings towards Pandit Nehru were no less cordial and affectionate. In his address to the U. P. Political Conference he had expressed himself as follows:

> I would consider myself very fortunate if I could render you some little service in the absence of Pandit Jawaharlalji. His absence makes this conference almost like a ship without a pilot. He has a very clear idea of the hardships of the peasants, their condition and their difficulties. No one has rendered as much service to the peasants as he and his sick wife have. For your sake he has sacrificed a life of comfort and readily shared your troubles. Your poverty infuriates him. How can we move a step forward without his help?

However Pandit Nehru himself felt compelled to state his position as follows on his return from abroad in a Statement, in which he said *inter alia:*

> What I seek is an elimination of profit in society and its replacement by a spirit of social service,cooperation taking the place of competition, production for consumption and not for profit. Because I hate violence and consider it an abomination, I cannot tolerate willingly our present system which is based on violence. I seek therefore a bold, enduring and a willing system from which the roots of violence have been removed and where hatred shrivels up and yields place to nobler feelings—all this I call socialism.

The development of Pandit Nehru's personality was in some ways similar to and in other ways different from that of Sardar's. Both started as blind followers of Gandhiji and sacrificed their European ways and comforts and turned over a new leaf under his influence and inspiration. Both started their schooling in politics through a peasant's agitation. The influence of Gandhiji on Sardar was, however, close and intimate and a matter of almost everyday occurrence but on Jawaharlal Nehru it was rather remote and not of such frequent occurrence. Sardar was fairly advanced in age and maturity; Jawaharlal Nehru was comparatively young and more impressionable and emotional. He attracted younger elements and was influenced by them. The process led to the beginning of a change in him as early as 1923 but by 1926 when he along with Srinivasa Iengar and Subhas Bose formed the Independence of India League, the inner voice of dissent found an outward expression. Thenceforward, he was the spokeman of the minority in the Congress Working Committee. He differed from Gandhiji in his attitude to those who used violent methods out of patriotic motives. In that respect he differed from his own father. In the Dominion Status V. Independence controversy his heart and mind were against

the views of his father and Gandhiji but he sided with them at the time of the Nehru Report much to the annoyance and bewilderment of the rest of the younger set. During the negotiations culminating in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1930, he adopted a tougher line than Sardar's. Chronologically it seems that the removal of paternal influence made Jawaharlal Nehru more firm and independent in his views so much so that the draftsmanship of the Congress Working Committee Resolutions passed from Gandhiji mostly into his hands. Consequently brevity yielded place to length. Jawaharlal Nehru's foreign visits generated in him a more dynamic and fresh outlook almost everytime he went abroad. Sardar, in that respect was a stay-at-home and was influenced not by such external contact but by his own reading of men and events. On the question of socialism I doubt if even now students of politics know exactly what Pandit Nehru stood for; his ideas were not precise or rigid but fluid and somewhat vague as the extract quoted above would show. But Sardar's were more definite as the following extract of his statement, issued prior to Jawaharlal Nehru's election to Lucknow Congress Presidentship, shows:

> My withdrawal should not be taken to mean that I endorse all the views Jawaharlalji stands for. Indeed, Congressmen know that on some vital matters my views are in conflict with those held by Jawaharlalji. For instance, I do not believe in the inevitability of class-war. Whilst I detest Imperialism and admit the destructive inequality between the capitalist class and the famishing poor, I do believe that it is possible to purge capitalism of its hideousness. Whilst the Congress holds to non-violence and truth as indispensable means for the attainment of Independence, Congressmen—to be logical and true to their profession—must believe in the possibility of weaning those who are mercilessly exploiting the masses from what is a crime against humanity. I believe that when the masses awake to the sense of their terrible condition, they will know how to deal with it. There is no difficulty in my subscribing to the doctrine that all land and wealth belong to all. Being a farmer myself, and having identified myself with the peasantry for years, I know where the shoe pinches. But I know that nothing can be done except through the power of the people. We have, fortunately, learnt what non-violent non-cooperation can do. When the people have learnt the art of withdrawing their cooperation from the forces of evil, it will perish for want of nourishment. However, as Jawaharlalji stresses—and rightly so—our present purpose is to free India from foreign subjection and thus destroy imperialistic exploitation root and and branch. When we have attained this, it will be time to enforce our theories or plans. For the present, there should be no divided counsel but perfect cooperation amongst all the forces that are to be found in the vast national organisation of ours for achieving independence.

Pandit Nehru issued a statement in reply which also deserves notice in this context:

It would be absurd for me to treat this Presidential election as a vote for Socialism or against office acceptance. I have expressed my views on Socialism and pointed out how this colours all my outlook and my activity. I have futher expressed myself often enough against office acceptance and whenever opportunity occurs, I shall press this viewpoint before the Congress but it is for the Congress to decide this issue directly and on a full consideration of it and not as it were by a casual and indirect vote. I do believe political independence is the paramount issue before the country, and the necessity for a joint and united action for its achievement is incumbent on all of us. I say this to remove any misunderstanding and not to suggest even indirectly that I should be elected. If, in spite of this, I am elected, it can only mean that my general line of activity—during the last eight months—is approved by the majority of Congressmen and not because they accept my views on any particular issues. The considerations that have led me to act in this way hold, and, in so far as I can, I shall continue to act in the same way, whether I am President or not.

Pandit Nehru's association with Subhas Chandra Bose and the Socialists took him somewhat away from Gandhiji's views on important matters but Gandhiji's conflict with Subhas Chandra Bose and his adherence to the old Congress programme drew Sardar nearer to him. The result was that not only had Sardar to take a front-line position in controversies and became Gandhiji's shock-absorber but he also strengthened his association and closeness with other leaders like Rajendra Prasad, Shankarrao Deo, Acharya Kripalani, Jairamdas Daulatram, Govind Ballabh Pant, Pattabi Sitramayya, and Rajagopalachari. The distance increased between the two groups and an open confrontation took place in the Presidential election to the Tripuri Congress. Pandit Nehru was placed in an embarrassing situation as a result of these differences and ultimately kept aloof from the controversy; in fact, sometimes it seemed that he was sitting on the fence. When the final scene of battle was enacted, Subhas Chandra Bose felt aggrieved at this attitude of Pandit Nehru and never forgave him for it as long as he lived. Even though a schism was avoided, schismatic tendencies survived both in Bengal and at the Congress headquarters.

After the controversy ended in Subhas Chandra Bose's discomfiture, Pandit Nehru cast his lot generally with the Socialists led by Jayaprakash Narayan. Destiny however has strange ways of fulfilling itself. When war was declared in September 1939 against Germany, Gandhiji, after his historic visit to Simla to see the Viceroy, pleaded with the Congress to give unconditional support to the war-effort but found himself opposed by both Sardar and Pandit Nehru. In addition, when Gandhiji put the crucial issue of non-violence before the Committee, he found Sardar strongly opposed to his line. Though Sardar's dissent caused him some uneasiness and anguish, Gandhiji did not put any pressure on him to toe the line and put the controversy between himself and Sardar in the following perspective :

> Though the Sardar's way and mine seem to diverge it does not mean that our hearts also diverge. It was in my power to stop him from seceding from me. But it did not seem to be proper to do so. And it would have been morally wrong to strive with Rajaji in what he firmly regarded as his clear duty. Instead, therefore, of dissuading Rajaji, I encouraged him to follow his own course. It was my clear duty to do so. If I have the power to carry my experiment of Ahimsa to success in an apparently new field, if my faith endures, and if I am right in thinking that the masses are fundamentally non-violent, Rajaji and Sardar will again be with me as before.

Sardar also explained his stand as follows :

> People have hitherto been saying that I am blind follower of Bapu. If that were so, I would be proud but I see that is not the case. I would say even today that if he were to take the lead I would follow him. But I cannot do so since he wants that I should keep my eyes open and follow him only if my reason so directs.

After this erratic interlude, however, the prodigal son returned to the fold and Sardar tried unsuccessfully to get the Gujarat Provincial Congress to endorse Gandhiji's stand on non-violence. One is left to wonder if this was due to further heart-searching or a tactical move. However, when questions arose about individual civil disobedience and Quit India, Sardar not only stood four square with Gandhiji but in fact took the lead with a strong speech at Ahmedabad. Pandit Nehru, however, found more congenial company with Maulana Azad whose views seemed to be in accord with his. It was a happy combination, for the Maulana's practical outlook and sound judgement not only provided support to Pandit Nehru's intellectual exercises but also corrected any ideological or theoretical aberrations of his. The cleavage was particularly prominent during the Cripps negotiations of 1942 and also during discussions on the Quit India philosophy. The cleavage even followed the leaders into the Ahmednagar Fort where Congress leaders were detained. Whilst there, those in opposition sometimes indulged in strong denunciations of Gandhiji's line but Sardar equally strongly defended it. The grouping more or less persisted at the time of the Simla Conference and during the negotiations with the Cabinet Mission, except that towards the end, Sardar and Pandit Nehru came together in opposition to Gandhiji, while the Maulana remained in the wilderness until he was brought into the Cabinet in 1947-48.

During the absence of the leaders in Ahmednagar Fort and after Gandhiji's release in 1943, the latter came under Rajaji's influence. Rajaji who had parted company with the Congress after the Quit India Resolution to which he was opposed by conviction, had become very unpopular with Congressmen, so much so that when they were all realised his presence on the A.I.C.C. platform it was to Pandit Nehru like red rag to the bull. But Sardar's friendship

with him as also Gandhiji's love and affection for him remained steadfast. Rajaji succeeded in persuading Gandhiji to meet Jinnah. The meeting lasted for a number of days but without any concession on the part of Jinnah, despite substantial concessions on the part of Gandhiji, and the talks ended in a complete deadlock. Most Congress leaders blamed Rajaji for having persuaded Gandhiji to make departures from the accepted Congress policy. In fact, if Jinnah had accepted Gandhiji's proposals he would have secured what he himself termed as a 'moth-eaten' Pakistan. It will be recalled that Gandhiji signified his willingness to recommend to the Congress and the country the acceptance of the claim for separation demanded in the League's Resolution of 1940 under certain terms and conditions. He was not prepared to accept the two-nation theory but was prepared to accept a separate State if the inhabitants of the areas so desired, and those areas were to be demarcated by a Commission. Sardar did not approve of either the meeting or the proposals put forward by Gandhiji but then he was behind bars, unable to counter Rajaji's moves.

During the same period, another storm upset the outward placidity of Congress politics. Syed Mahmud, a valued colleague and a member of the Working Committee was released by Government and came to meet Gandhiji. Sardar had suspicions of his defection even when he was inside the Fort and these suspicions were confirmed when the correspondence with the Viceroy was made public and he made a clean breast of it before Gandhiji. Sardar could never dismiss from his mind the impression that his antics, prior to his release, were within the knowledge of at least Maulana Azad with whom he was on friendly terms. He spent much of his time during internment in the company of Maulana Azad and Pandit Nehru. However, the Indian attitude generally is one of tolerance of the delinquencies of friends, and notwithstanding this betrayal, Syed Mahmud staged a comeback after sometime.

Then came the release of members of the Working Committee including Sardar, and the infructuous Simla Conference with the same grouping of leaders except that the Khan Brothers definitely threw in their lot with the Gandhian group. This was followed by the elections to the Central and State Legislatures in which both the Congress and the League scored successes in their respective spheres of influence. In fact, the results showed that the League's influence among Muslims was as predominant as that of the Congress among the rest. The elections, however, further underlined a cleavage between the Congress President and Sardar but established his continued relation of cordiality and confidence with Pandit Nehru. An impartial study will reveal that Maulana Azad's intervention was not entirely disinterested or wise or tactically sound. Sardar's relations with Maulana Azad were generally happy. In fact, on most issues they agreed but Sardar had mental reservations about his professed nationalism and felt that he was not averse from taking a line different from that of most Congressmen on communal issues—a view which was confirmed by the proposals which Maulana made in September 1945 for the solution of constitutional problems. The philosophy underlying these proposals was the need for allaying Muslim fears and for giving them

a sense of security—a stand somewhat close to Jinnah's. Accordingly, he suggested a federal constitution with federating units enjoying full autonomy. The Central subjects would be confined to matters of an all-India nature agreed upon by the federating units, which could have the right of secession. He conceded joint electorates with reservation of seats but a differential franchise which would reflect population ratio. There was to be parity of Hindu and Muslim representation in the Central Legislature and executive until communal suspicions disappeared and parties were formed on economic and political lines (as if vested interests could be expected ever to abolish themselves). In the initial period, the head of the Indian Federation would be Hindu or Muslim by turn. Notwithstanding this heresy, the Maulana continued to lead the Congress and represent it in negotiations with the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission, once indulging in a deal with the latter which smacked of something of a betrayal for which he had to express some penitence and eventually leave the Congress *gaddi* under a shadow. Nevertheless, both Sardar and Maulana Azad entertained respect for each other and Sardar used to say that except where Muslim interests were involved, the Maulana generally supported his point of view. Later, when differences arose between Sardar and Pandit Nehru over Purshottam Das Tandon's election, Maulana's influence over Pandit Nehru was generally exercised in favour of a reconciliation; to some extent, however, it was determined by Maulana's dislike of Rafi Ahmad Kidwai's influence over Panditji. It was therefore a great surprise to me when I read Maulana's comments on Sardar in his book, *India Wins Freedom*. The inaccuracies in which that book abound, the false accusations that were made in it, the false claims he makes for himself and a number of other blemishes were brought out by me in three articles which were published in The Hindustan Times soon after the book's publication.

The readers will have got from the main narrative glimpses of Sardar's relations with Rajendra Prasad, Rajaji and Acharya Kripalani. With all three of them he had close relations, but, in the case of Acharya Kripalani, after his election as Congress President, differences between him and Sardar and Pandit Nehru came up, which resulted in his resignation. I can bear witness to the fact that Sardar very strongly supported and actually worked for Acharya Kripalani at the time of his election to the Presidentship of the Meerut Congress and on many occasions countered secret moves on the part of Maulana Azad to return to the chair. I can also testify that Sardar throughout regretted the parting of the ways and used to recall with pleasure the earlier close relations and dwelt with pain on the rift which had separated the two. With Rajendra Prasad his relations were brotherly while with Govind Ballabh Pant they were those of an affectionate leader and a devoted follower. Throughout Govind Ballabh Pant's controversial bouts with Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, the brunt of defending Pant fell on Sardar and he did so without putting him to the embarrassment of defending himself particularly in Pandit Nehru's presence, for Pant had so much regard for Pandit Nehru that he could never contradict him. It was only when Pant came to the Centre and Pandit Nehru began to lean on him for support that he became more

forthcoming. Sardar and Rajaji were always very close to each other and remained so up to the end. I know that Rajaji missed Sardar, and I enjoyed his affection and regard principally because I was associated with Sardar. God had spared him for so many years to preserve much that was good in the old; though he often appeared a lone crusader, even the ranks of Tuscany could hardly forbear to cheer when he came out with intelligent, penetrating and sharp comments on both short-term and long-term problems.

During the Cabinet Mission's negotiations, however, differences in approach developed between Sardar and Gandhiji, though Sardar and Pandit Nehru came nearer each other and Maulana Azad was eventually left in the cold; for the time being Panditji had no need of him, having found a stronger and more dependable support in Sardar. Sardar at one stage was prepared to concede the bonafides of something that the Reforms Office of the Viceroy had done whereas Gandhiji was somewhat confused. A joint visit to the Viceroy satisfied Sardar but Gandhiji's suspicions deepened. Gandhiji was so upset that he told Sardar that thereafter he should guide the Working Committee. Sardar replied, 'Nothing of the sort. I am not going to say a word. You yourself tell them what you want.' Gandhiji did not like this conversation and chided him with speaking hotly in the Committee and acknowledged that both of them were drifting in different directions. Sardar replied, 'I must be at fault. Only I cannot yet see it and that makes me feel unhappy. I do not want to take a different path. . I do betray some heat when I speak in the Committee. That is a temperamental defect. . . but there is nothing in it.'

After the Cabinet Mission negotiations were over, Sardar and Gandhiji went in different directions in the physical sense. The months July-August 1946 were months of presentation on the part of the Congress for acceptance of office at the Centre in terms of the Viceroy's offer to Pandit Nehru who had been elected (formally) as Congress President in succession to Maulana Azad. Gandhiji, on the other hand, sped eastwards on a mission of peace and restoration of order and goodwill in the disturbed and tense atmosphere of Bengal. After less than a year and just before Partition, in the midst of the political confusion, Gandhiji returned to Delhi, and expressed his anguish over the decision to accept Partition. But once Sardar and Pandit Nehru, particularly the former, explained their point of view, Gandhiji accepted their bonafides and though he himself remained unconvinced and unreconciled, he asked the A. I. C. C. to stand by the Working Committee. After the deed was done, Gandhiji again proceeded to Bengal but returned later when communal fires were raging on both sides of the border and Delhi itself was in flames. Gandhiji described the changed atmosphere as follows:

> When I came to Delhi yesterday, I found that the face and colour of the city had changed. The people I met; I met Sardar; Raj kumari was there; none of them had any cheerfulness on their faces. There was no radiance. The Sardar used to walk with his head held high; I tell you the head is bowed low. Jawaharlal, who walked in the air, feels helpless. Why should they be helpless ? I asked, the Sardar, who is so brave, Does he feel defeated ?

I am his friend, am I not? He was never like this.

This brings us more or less to the time when these reminiscences began. The story of the evening of Sardar's life has been told in these pages insofar as my memory bears witness to it. In many ways Sardar had no successor and left none. The mixture of virtues and characteristics which he contained within himself and displayed to the outside world is rarely to be found in a single personality. But what is amazing is the manner in which he brought out those virtues as occasion demanded. Each crisis or great occasion found him in a different form. In Kheda, he was a worker acquiring mastery over details and an organiser who welded the peasant community into one; at the same time, he was a keen, industrious and painstaking student imbibing lessons from a Great Teacher. He developed these virtues and began to be reckoned as a leader. As such he practised discipline and inculcated it in others; he trusted and begot trust; he inspired and led; he breathed faith and confidence; he commanded his followers as only a man born to lead could. In Gandhiji's absence he showed independent qualities of leadership and with grit, determination, firmness and skill, faced the onslaughts of such valiant and well-armed fighters as Deshbandhu C. R. Das, Pandit Motilal Nehru and his own redoubtable elder brother, Vithalbhai, whom he treated affectionately as a brother but unsparingly as an opponent. In Kheda, in municipal affairs, and at Nagpur, he skilfully outmanoeuvred his adversaries by intelligent marshalling of facts, dexterous use of tactics,and competent leadership; he always had an answer for his critics.

Bardoli presented him as a complete man in whom were combined all the qualities he had exhibited uptodate. But new features exhibited themselves. He organised the campaign with the thoroughness and resourcefulness with which a military campaign is planned, prepared and executed. He devoted full attention to the preparation of the base, to the sustenance of morale, to the planning and execution of thrusts, to the frustration of counter-attacks and to the organisation of resistance, and to the problems of the aftermath. The victory of Bardoli earned for him 'the Crown', as Pandit Motilal Nehru put it. After Bardoli, India found in Sardar a leader of eminence, second only to his mentor, to lead the country to victory in the struggle for emancipation.

But who could have thought at the time that the leader in war would prove to be a matchless leader of peace. The Parliamentary programme of the Congress from 1935-1939, and then again from 1946 onwards involving the mobilisation of resources for election and supervision over and guidance to the Ministries with their own multifarious local problems and complicated relationship with the European Governors and European dominated Services called for qualities of a different nature from those required for the struggle. Vigilance, a broad vision, knowledge of his own men, keen perception of strategy and watchful employment of tactics, capacity to understand and willingness to revise a decision where necessary, swiftness of action, quickness and soundness of decisions, and firmness mixed with tact—all these and more were required in the role which Sardar had to discharge and it was fortunate

for the country and the Congress that he exhibited these qualities in an ample measure.

During the difficult and decisive negotiations with the Cripps Mission and then the Cabinet Mission and subsequently with the Viceroy over the entry of the League into Government, he could see farther than most people who were engaged in talks. But perhaps the most prominent quality he exhibited was realism. It is that quality which made him realise the disasters that awaited the country if the British remained in it any longer; it is also the selfsame virtue which enabled him to comprehend the urgent necessity of getting into the Interim Government and thereby forestalling both the League and its sympathisers. It is also that sense of realism which made him draw Gandhiji's attention to the dangers lurking in the Bhopal formula. To that realism he added his own native but strong common-sense and his inborn peasant shrewdness. These enabled him to outmanoeuvre the tactics of Jinnah. Again, it was that realism which forced him to a parting of the ways with Gandhiji after being a yesman for nearly thirty years.

He never failed to exhibit resilience when it was needed. In his dealings with his colleagues in the Municipality during a difficult situation, in his handling of the Gujarat Provincial Committee affairs, in his attitude to non-violence, in his handling of issues in the Indian States, particularly at Rajkot, in his bringing about a peaceful and successful conclusion the peasant revolt in Kheda and Bardoli, the plague at Borsad, the Flag Satyagraha at Nagpur, and in the organisation of a campaign against punitive tax at Borsad, he showed himself a skilful organiser and a successful negotiator with an eye not so much on the rigidity of prestige as on getting the best out of the efforts and sacrifices that had gone into the struggle. During negotiations he had an unerring eye for what he could give up or withhold and what he could secure or retain. He had the amazing capacity of infecting his adversaries with faith in himself and in his words and putting them in the mood to come to terms. The best tribute in this respect he got from Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan when on his death he said, 'He said what he meant and meant what he said.' His Muslim League colleagues in the Interim Government paid him the compliment, 'With you we know where we stand.' It was this reputation of a 'man of word and of action' which he had acquired over the years and of which he gave proof many times which won him the loyalty of the people.

But his sun shone the brightest during the four fateful and momentous years to which this narrative principally relates. One theme would run throughout this period—his intense love of his country. It is that love which made him subordinate himself during many situations in which the fire in his eyes could have provoked him to aggression. It is that love which was the touchstone of all his policies and all his attitudes. The burning passion of the glory and greatness of his country was his guiding star whether he dealt with the problem of unification, or peace and security of the country, or laying the foundation of its prosperity or the evolution and determination of its foreign policy. The same ideal inspired him in Constitution-making, a detailed and

decisive task. At every crucial stage during that long process, apart from committees which were assigned to his charge, it was his intervention which put an end to controversies or settled points in dispute or pointed the solution of the problems. But his greatest triumph lay in the settlement of the minority problem. By creating an atmosphere of faith and trust, by appealing to patriotism, by a display of breadth of outlook and vision and by an exhibition of liberalism and generosity, he was able to bring them round; the cordial atmosphere during the debate was so at such a high level that he was lifted shoulder-high and carried through the Hall after the conclusion of his memorable speech.

Another triumph of his was the manner in which he won the hearts of the Princes by his patriotism, his sincerity, his generosity and his humane approach to their sentiments and problems. Without all this, the miracle of integration brought about during the short period of two years would never have been possible; the advocates of the Bismarckian policy of 'blood and iron', who prefer to be wise after the event and indulge in empty-sounding words of bravado or launch broadsides against those,who are no longer in a position to defend themselves, should take note of the fact that in many cases the States people themselves were the greatest protagonists of their autonomy under monarchical rule, and that during discussions in the Negotiating Committee and in the report to the Constituent Assembly, Pandit Nehru himself had accepted its continuance after the entry of the States into the Union.

As regards his attitude towards Partition, both he and Pandit Nehru had come to regard it in April 1947 as inevitable and as a better alternative than the potentially anarchical plan which had been devised for transfer of power by the Viceroy and the British Government. Sardar was however inspired by a variety of ideas. He had arrived at the conclusion for which there is ample support, that any fruitful association with the League inside the Government was impossible and that the continuance of the current state of things would only land the country into a civil war. The blood bath of 1947 on both sides of the Frontier was limited and much less costly than would have been the case if the whole country had been involved in that bloody struggle. He also realised that what the country needed most to achieve its goal of prosperity was unity and a strong Central Government. The Cabinet Mission Plan was not going to achieve either. It was his constant theme in justification of Partition that they could now administer at least two-thirds of the country without having to face in-built obstruction at every turn. It is my conviction that but for Partition the unity of the country would have been an elusive dream and both an independent foreign policy and economic planning would have been the first casualties. Similarly, the ideals of secularism and comparative peace between the different communities that we have been able to achieve during the last twenty years would have been retreating from our view like mirages in the desert.

Thus, unity and integration held the key to so many things that were vital to us as a nation and if we had to make the sacrifice of Partition to secure it there should be no regrets and no remorse. The motive forces underlying

Sardar's attitude on this most important question that faced the country or will ever face it in its history were a combination of patriotism, the vision that he held of the country's glory and greatness, the need for the solution of the pressing problems of poverty and backwardness and the achievement of peace, harmony and security in the sub-continent. It is wrong to suggest, as some have suggested, that he was out for a conflict with Pakistan. He often expressed his view that Partition should be looked at as a partition between brothers. He also professed on more than one occasion that even if Pakistan wanted to come back he would not support it because fissiparous tendencies could manifest themselves again with more disastrous consequences. He said on more than one occasion that there was no question of destroying Pakistan and in fact wished it well in future. At the same time, he could not resist the feeling that since the very beginning, Pakistan had adopted a hostile posture, that its founders had tried to sabotage the country's unity and secure a foothold in India in order to hold a perpetual pistol at its head, and that whether it was Jammu and Kashmir or whether it was Hyderabad or whether it was the exodus of minorities from the west and the east, Pakistan's policy had always been to create trouble for India. The two wars we had to fight in 1965 and in 1971 were only the culmination of the hymn of hate and hostility which had been sung throughout Pakistan ever since Partition. Who can then blame Sardar for having exercised caution, circumspection and distrust in moulding his attitude towards Pakistan and in forestalling or circumventing its manoeuvres during the first four years of our independence? Yet, when one occasion arose, namely during the Nehru-Liaquat Ali Pact negotiations when his approval or disapproval could prove decisive, he returned the Pakistan Prime Minister's sincerity with a noble gesture, and not only became a party to the signing of the pact but braving ill-health, he also proceeded to Calcutta to pacify the trouble-makers in Bengal and finally won it in favour of the Pact. He concluded that memorable visit by a broadcast which in its spirit of faith and understanding, in its eloquence and breath of vision would be hard to beat.

Sardar has often been branded as a communalist. That he was a Hindu and proved to be one none can deny. That is a pride which he shared and will continue to share with millions in his own country. I well recall a debate in the old U.P. Legislative Council (pre-Montford Reforms) in which the late Pandit Motilal Nehru defended himself by saying that Hindu blood ran in his veins and that he was no less a Hindu than his opponents. It was that pride which provided shelter to many in his own party who appeared in the garb of false non-Hindu secularism but secretly expressed themselves to the contrary. Sardar refused to concede that it was necessary to be non-Hindu and pro-Muslim in order to earn the title of a secularist. In the pursuit of secularism he did not wish that Muslims or Christians should cease to be such. He did intend, however, that Hindus, Muslims or Christians or whatever other denomination a person may belong to, should not import religion into politics. He also believed that the interests of the minorities could not be pushed to a point where they gravely prejudiced the interests of the majority or

of the country. He had full faith in India as a secular State and was all for reasonable concessions by the majority community to meet the genuine apprehensions and aspirations of the minority. On more than one occasion he gave ample proof of this. It was entirely due to his inspiration that the minorities with one voice gave up their claims to reservation of seats and thereby enabled the Constitution to be framed on a secular democratic foundation. He was no less ruthless in meeting the challenge of the Hindu Mahasabha and R.S.S. than he was in meeting the challenge of Muslim communalists. The India of his dreams was a haven of security for a loyal Hindu, a loyal Muslim, a loyal Christian and a loyal Sikh but not for those who engaged themselves in treasonable activities and propagated anti-national beliefs, whether they were Hindus, Muslims or Christians. If he came into conflict with his contemporaries on matters involving communal issues, it was either because they were more sympathetic to minorities at the expense of the vital interests of the majority or because they closed their minds to the faults of the minority while they had their eyes and ears open to the shortcomings of the majority. Despite all this, he tried his best to keep the scales even in the detailed working of his departments, between the claims of different communities. In matters of appointments and service claims particularly, I can vouch for the fact that he made merit and seniority the criteria, irrespective of caste, community or the State of domicile, and that any instance of injustice which came to his notice never went unremedied, whichever community was involved, even if it meant the review of past decisions. His generous treatment of Rampur and Bhopal and even the erstwhile refractory Nizam is alone sufficient to disprove the taint of communalism that is generally cast on him.

I think that in order to assess Sardar's personality it is necessary also to appreciate his attitude towards Socialists and Communists. So far as Socialists were concerned, his statements already quoted earlier give an inkling as to his ideas. He was personally on the best of terms with the Socialist leader, Jayaprakash Narayan. It was not Sardar who misunderstood him but it was Jayaprakash Narayan who misunderstood Sardar as the latter's speech at the Red Fort function on Sardar's birthday in 1971 shows. He never doubted the sincerity of the Socialists; he only questioned the soundness of their approach in many matters, lamented the confusion of ideas that they exhibited and criticised the haste with which they intended to act without regard for the circumstances in which the country was placed. He firmly believed that from the point of view of exploitation of material resources, industrial and agricultural progress, and availability of manpower and other relevant factors, the country was so backward and had to go so far that nothing short of united endeavour, team-work, industrial peace and a thorough reorganisation of efforts for a number of years could mitigate the shortcomings and drawbacks from which the country suffered and could take the country forward on the road to prosperity.

As regards the Communists, his approach is fully evidenced by the instructions he gave me when I went to dine with the Russian Charge d'affaires in

1950 and is also typified by the speeches he delivered in the Parliament while piloting the Preventive Detention Bill. He had no quarrel with Communism in theory but he felt that destructive methods, violent activities and extra-territorial loyalties constituted a threat to the peace, security and well-being of the State and had to be dealt with as anti-national activities. He wanted the Communists to follow Parliamentary methods and had no quarrel if they won popular support in the process. But he could not tolerate their anti-social and coercive activities. With the view he held about the need of industrial peace, he naturally disliked their trade union activities based on the philosophy of class-hatred and class-war. Similarly, in view of the active and financial support foreign powers particularly U.S.S.R. and China gave to the Communists in India, he treated them with suspicion and in the latter case, where the actual threat to our peace and security loomed large nearer home, he wanted to be wary and prepared. In these matters, therefore, his views were formed entirely on the considerations which his patriotism induced in him.

Sarojini Naidu in her own characteristic manner described Sardar as 'a rough diamond in an iron casket' The description does bring out some aspects of his personality. After his death tributes were paid to the qualities of his head and heart, his services to the country, and his achievements. They came from friends and foes, from far and near. But the best were those paid to him by Pandit Nehru, referred to earlier. But four years after his death, Pandit Nehru again paid a handsome tribute to him at the A. I.C.C. meeting held in Delhi in December 1954.

To those like me, however, who had the delight and privilege of working under his command, and the rare opportunity to watch him at close quarters, who saw him dealing with men and matters in various moods and situations, who received from him many an act of kindness and consideration, and who were yet struck with awe and reverence, it is his intensely human qualities that will form the frame in which all those tributes and all those impressions are set.

Sardar was *par excellence* a self-made man. He owed little to others until he met Gandhiji. Gandhiji was undoubtedly the greatest single influence on his life. Otherwise, he shaped his personality and his destiny on the basis of what he lived through, the challenges he met, the situations he had to deal with, and the environments in which he had to work. When one considers the different roles he filled, the responsibilities he discharged, the late stage at which he had to execute the duties of his office, the decisive influence he exercised over the fortunes of his own countrymen, the comparatively little education he had, and along with all this the very complicated and critical problems which he had to face, one cannot escape the conclusion that Providence intended him to be a man of Destiny through whom it wanted to fulfill itself in many ways.

Without any deep knowledge of history, with some acquaintance with contemporary events, and aided only by notes that were put up to him, he could make his own contribution to discussions on such complicated issues as the

future of the Secretary of State's Services, the mechanism of the transfer of power, the details of Partition, the future structure of the Services, the problems of Indian States, the conflict with Pakistan on Jammu and Kashmir State, the consequential discussions in the United Nations Commission on India and Pakistan, India's membership of the Commonwealth, relations with China on the question of Tibet, and a host of other problems of varying degree of complexity and seriousness. It was said of Pitt, the Elder, that no one entered his room without coming out of it a braver man. It can be truly said of Sardar that none went near Sardar without coming out a chastened man. He instinctively inspired confidence, he emitted faith and resoluteness, and he found one out before one knew that he had done so. His iron constitution itself inspired obedience and respect, his speeches were listened to in pin-drop silence, his humour was both telling and enjoyable, he could dispose of arguments by an ounce of sarcasm, he could dispel the surrounding gloom following a dispute, he inspired simultaneously fear and affection, submission and devotion and acquiescence and loyalty. Many a stalwart of the Congress, who could hold his own in the country, came to him to seek instructions and went back convinced not questioning either the authority or the reasoning. If there were at that time in India one Delphian Oracle it was Sardar. He attained this position of pre-eminence by dint of his own reputation and his achievements. Even Pandit Nehru, when not in a rebellious mood, approached Sardar in the spirit of a seeker of instruction and guidance and often submitted to his judgement without question. This, to my mind, is the greatest tribute to Sardar's personality, for as far as I know, during those days Pandit Nehru did not give even Gandhiji that much of submission, and his own ego was not prepared to play second fiddle to any living man however much support it demanded from others.

On the human plane, Sardar exhibited qualities of warmth and feeling when the occasion arose. His capacity to win over his detractors and critics was amazing, Churchill, despite Sardar's hostile criticism, sent him a note conveying his warm admiration, through a distinguished emissary. John Mathai who started as a critic and an opponent ended up as an admirer and a grateful colleague. Girija Shankar Bajpai, the sophisticated and polished civil servant, at first showed a virtual contempt for Sardar, but eventually recognised the diamond in him. The League leaders including Jinnah hated him, the latter particularly for his part in making the Cabinet Mission agree that the Congress had accepted the long-term plan, nevertheless they put their faith in him and his word and treated him with respect, while they openly slighted Pandit Nehru who was always pleading for the Muslim cause. Nariman suffered under Sardar's strong hand, and hit Sardar hard on numerous occasions, but eventually lived to express remorse and seek forgiveness which was given to him. Sardar and C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer of Travancore did not spare each other in controversies, but when the latter accepted defeat and placed his services at Sardar's disposal, he made the noble gesture of inviting him to his house and making him feel as if nothing had happened. Considered as the bitterest enemy of the British, the Sardar

befriended Britishers as few did, and became so staunch an advocate of India's membership of the Commonwealth, that he bore the brunt of explaining the final act in the drama to the people in advance of Pandit Nehru's return to the country. In selecting people to help him, his discerning eye would settle on a person irrespective of his politics. The outstanding examples of this are his selection of V. P. Menon as his Secretary for the States Ministry, his recommendation for utilising the services of A. Ramaswamy Mudaliar to represent India before the U. N. Security Council when the Hyderabad question came up, his offer of chairmanship of the U. P. S. C. to Ajit Prasad Jain, his advice to Pandit Nehru to take in S. P. Mookerji, B. R. Ambedkar, and Shanmukham Chetty in the first Cabinet of independent India. He won over the late Jam Saheb, and forgot and forgave so many erring politicians in order to harness their service to the country.

His affection for his associates knew no bounds. K. M. Munshi has cited instances in which he acted as a watchful guardian and ministering angel to his fellow-inmates in jail. Mahadeva Desai has quoted instances of his services to Gandhiji and consideration for fellow-prisoners in Yeravada jail. His solicitude for those who accompanied him in his travels or worked with him has been acknowledged with gratitude by many. Relentless as a worker, he made others work hard but always recognised the good work that they did. Despite Laik Ali's escape, when the matter was raised in Parliament, he defended M.K. Vellodi who was Chief Minister and D. S. Bakhle who was Home Member at the time. His tribute to the Services in the Constituent Assembly earned for him their enternal gratitude which was expressed in an unprecedented manner at a largely attended meeting after his death. He was the lone admirer of the excellent contribution B. N. Rau made at a meeting of the U. N. Security Council on Jammu and Kashmir. When K. M. Munshi left his post in Hyderabad with his health run down and under a shadow because Pandit Nehru did not quite approve of him, it was Sardar's soothing words which gave him comfort and assuaged his feelings. Many of his associates have since then had to pay for their loyalty to him. They have borne suffering in silence, regarding his appreciation and the fact of their service to him as adequate recompense.

My reminiscences and some of the accounts and extracts given earlier bring out his relationship with Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru. Sardar, as long as he lived, and despite some differences of opinion, never wavered in his affection and reverence for and love of Gandhiji. The little cloud that crept over that relationship between December 1947 and mid-January 1948, passed over at the last interview he had with him. With Pandit Nehru, his relations were those of comradeship, brotherliness, and mutual love and admiration. A sence of rivalry was generated in both, not so much among themselves as because of the different sets of loyalties they commanded, and of the truth of the Persian adage that, 'Saints do not fly in the air; it is the disciples that credit them with the virtue.' I can bear witness to the fact that so far as Sardar was concerned it was a healthy rivalry motivated by what he considered good for the country; he never harboured any design with a view to usurping the

position. Sardar, though regretting the fact that he was not younger by a few years, never had ambitions to occupy the Premiership; he refused it three times when it was within his grasp. He was convinced that in the circumstances Pandit Nehru alone could fill that place but at the same time he realised the words of Jawaharlal's late father's injunctions to him. His emotionalism, his care for and accessibility to his friends and sometimes his relations, were apt to lead him astray and Sardar was the only contemporary of his who could apply the corrective without being resented. It is, therefore, tragic that towards the close, the choice of Congress Presidentship should have cast a shadow on that cordial and fruitful relationship which meant so much for the country. It is futile to apportion blame to the one or the others. Sardar went not so much on personal merits or demerits but acceptability to the Congressmen particularly in U.P., Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, Shankarrao Dev not being acceptable to most of the country. When to his utter surprise Pandit Nehru lent his support behind his back to Acharya Kripalani notwithstanding his past rift with him and the rejection of his candidature at an earlier meeting, Sardar confessed himself both hurt and disillusioned. Even then he saw to it that Tandon did not impede Pandit Nehru in any way and fully supported him in his general policies. In the light of this, no one can call Pandit Nehru's changed attitude towards Sardar as deserved, nor can one justify the attempts to play down his memory after his death. The collections made for his memorials have not been used to erect a national monument; they have been frittered away only partly in insignificant memorials in some parts of the country; what has happened to the rest, the public does not know. Whatever statues, busts and memorials exist are the result of individual initiative by his admirers, with the solitary exception of a few States, prominent among them being Gujarat. Let the readers of this book judge whether it is, as compared to what has been done for two other nation-builders, a fitting acknowledgment of the valiant and outstanding contribution to the country and the Congress by one who so much helped the two nation-builders to achieve what they did and who was the co-builder of independent India, the architect of its unity and the consolidator of its freedom. He can be credited with many of our successes in foreign and domestic policies on which the reputatiton of both his contemporaries and his successors was built.

Twenty-six

Retrospect and Prospect

IN AN earlier chapter I have referred to the activities of some people at the top to play down Sardar's memory and his achievements. In my reminiscences I have alluded to the closing stages of Sardar's life, attempts to belittle the importance of last rites and to the assessment which Sardar gave me of Congressmen. I would like to recall these here. At times, after his death, the situations were such that many could not openly express their admiration for him lest they should be dubbed as Patellites and lose all chances of promotion in the hierarchy or their place in the distribution of posts. All honour goes to those who, braving all fears and apprehensions, have paid annual tributes to his precious memory or who have remembered him in times of crises and difficulties through which the country has passed during the last twenty-two years since his death.

It was while struck with a feeling of bitter disappointment at the ingratitude of the generality of people in power who should have considered it their duty to cherish and preserve his memory as they are doing in the case of others, that on 31 October 1954 I gave expression to my feelings in a speech at the Harold Laski Institute on his birthday function presided over by Dadasaheb Mavlankar in the following words:

> Now I have given you in brief a comparison of Sardar's achievements with those of some of the famous historical personalities and I shall now leave it to you to judge what place he has carved for himself in history. It was in a small village enshrined in the bosom of Gujarat from which that light emerged. For a time it shone through the Law Courts of some of the districts of Gujarat. It then came and settled in Ahmedabad after a brief acquisition of scholastic illumination from England. It was in Ahmedabad that he performed many of his triumphant feats in civic and political affairs. But soon a higher call called him to his other city of adoption—that is Bombay—and from Bombay for years he issued those famous decrees which settled the destinies of Ministers and Ministries in various provinces. It was in Bombay that he nourished, commented and strengthened that political organisation, which ultimately secured for India its freedom and which has been ruling over its destinies for the last seven years. It was, mind you, on a critical day in a very explosive situation that he saved that city of adoption when it was threatened by an unprecedented mutiny of Naval ratings and an incautious step might have blown up that great city, that pride of Gujarat,

that pride of Maharashtra and that pride of the whole of India. He was then called on duty to Delhi and nowhere were his political genius, his political sagacity and wise statesmanship in greater evidence than in the consultations which preceded first the finalisation of the Cabinet Mission Plan and then partition. Partition was a severe blow to him, but he felt that rather than jeopardise the whole, take three-fourths of the country and at least govern it untrammolled by an intricate and absurd system of weightages and of vesting of residuary powers and all the other constitutional hybrid and hated systems which were being put before us. Independence came and then the light that you had sent from this province of Saints and Mahatmas, stood in Delhi like a beacon light of hope, of confidence and of faith in destiny. Two years passed, three years passed and the light illuminated the whole country from Jammu and Kashmir to Cape Comorin and from Kamrup to shall I say, Banaskantha. But I can tell you with all sense of responsibility and seriousness that like the proverbial monkey, we cast away the matchless jewel that was with us. Tired, emaciated, worn out by disease, he started from that city of Delhi on his last journey in the hope of a quick recovery in Bombay. But the cruel hand of death took him away from our midst.

But look at the greatness of that man. I was with him up to the end. Not once the thought of his self-denying daughter whom he was leaving in the hands of his countrymen came to him; not once he thought of his son, of his grandson to whom he was devoted; not once he thought of many of his servants who looked up to him not only as a master but as a great father of a great family but always he was thinking about the welfare of his country. A day previous to his death he was worrying about many things. He was worrying about whether this country would be able to bear the burden of the quick changes that took place. He was worrying about the economic situation of the country and it was with that worry on his head that that great light was extinguished that morning of 15 December 1950, plunging in sorrow all of us, the whole country and every one who used to look up to him and seek his advice in every situation of difficulty. I have often asked myself, in the words of Tennyson:

> The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
> And God fulfils himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world !

What purpose did God fulfil in terminating the good custom that was Sardar? Was it to test our loyalty to him, to test our faith in him when he was alive? Was it to expose how we paid lip-homage to him when he was alive and forswore him when he was gone? At his death, the Prime Minister felt so lonely, so did the President who regarded him as his elder brother and so did all of us and the men, women and children who thronged the streets of Bombay right up to the highest vantage point that they could occupy. But whither has gone all that sorrow of ours, all that distress

for him? One thing has always sustained me and I hope sincerely that it will sustain you and that is that his place in history is assured; it is beyond the reach of any political critics that he might have had or any detractors that he might still be having. It is in that assurance and in that faith that I decided to speak to you and I would now ask you and through you thousands of my country-men to question their conscience and say whether, as I said in the beginning, they do not owe to his memory much more than what they owed to him when he was alive.

I do not have to be apologetic about what I said then. We as a nation have sung more about mythical gods and heroes than our own real ones. We have exploited famous names to our advantage and at our convenience but, lacking historical sense and perspective, have seldom done so in the light of their achievements or in the context of the contribution which they have made to national build-up or national well-being. The result has been that we have survived through history not with that dignity which is the hall-mark of great nations but as the gift of time and divine grace which have enabled us to muddle through. Howsoever much it is necessary to live in the present and prepare for the future, we cannot afford to forget or neglect the past. At a meeting in Oxford, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu in her own inimitable style said, 'England must hold her head down in shame as long as India has manacles on her wrists.' We are apt to lose sight of the fact that though the manacles have gone, the marks remain as grim reminders of a disgraceful past when we on so many occasions went down before foreign invaders or even without them landed ourselves in confusion, chaos and anarchy. The periods of our glory in our thousands of years have been few while those of shame and disgrace have been many. Only ten years ago we suffered the same shame and disgrace. It is true that many of our foreign invaders have subsequently become a part of us. But that does not make the periods of their domination a matter of pride and greatness. We have yet to make ourselves a nation in the real sense of the term; we have to go much farther in time to make ourselves great. But if we intend to achieve that greatness we have to seek lessons from the past in the spirit of Southey :

My thoughts are with the dead; with them
I live in long past years,
Their virtues love, their faults condemn
Partake their hopes and fear.
And from their lessons seek and find
Instruction with an humble mind.

It was with this approach in mind that I accepted last year an invitation from Sardar Patel University at Anand to deliver two memorial lectures on 'India of Sardar's Dream and the Reality'. The burden of this epilogue would be the same. I was also happy to receive an invitation from the Indian Express to write an article for their 15 August 1972 number devoted to topics

appropriate for the twenty-fifth anniversary of Independence on 'India of Sardar's dream and the last 25 years', covering more or less the same themes as I covered in my two lectures.

The period during which Sardar came to Delhi and assumed the office of Home Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council in advance of the transfer of power, was one of the most critical which this country has faced. The period after the Transfer was no less so perhaps even more critical. The twenty years which have elapsed since he left us may have obliterated the memories of the crisis after crisis Sardar had to meet during those fateful years but the fact remains that we have lived through them and survived them when one false stop or move would have meant disaster, when not only was there an atmosphere of darkness and gloom surrounding us but there were not wanting prophets of doom both within the country and outside. There were people wanting to strangle new India at its birth, the cult of violence was current, the threat of Balkanisation loomed large, Pakistan had its knife and dagger into us and actually made us the target both for its bullets and venomous shafts and our own economic situation was far from a happy one. It was then that Sardar wrestled with all those formidable problems, resolutely face those dangers and successfully steered the ship of State through the menacing rocks that lay in and threatened its course and put it on smooth and calm waters to launch itself on the journey beyond. He did so with a sense of dedication, a cousciousness of the mission that Destiny and the country had entrusted to him, a sense of patriotic duty and a vision of this country's future which together constituted a package of deep urges which inspired him to make light of his advancing years, his physical disabilities which overtook him in later years and the difficulties that beset his path. He made full use of the fleeting time which he knew he must catch by the forelock if he were to do all that he intended to do.

Sardar, though lacking a thorough knowledge of history, still had a deep perspective of it. Time after time, the past with its lost opportunities, its weaknesses and shortcomings, its failures, its shortlived triumphs and longer periods of defeats and foreign rule used to come to him both as a lesson and a warning. He warned his country many a time against complacency, against relapsing into errors and ways which cost us our freedom in the past, which made us a prey to poverty after attaining an affluence which was the object of envy of other countries, and which led to our degeneration and downfall so many times. It was in that context that he entertained a vision of the country's unity which became a pleasant obsession and a dominating passion with him. The shrine of Mother India in its beauty and comprehensiveness was the object of his constant devotion and, installed in his mind perpetually, it led him to forge a unity of the country which it had never attained in recorded history. It is true that we lost a limb or two through Partition, but he not only saved the rest but wove it all into a fabric which in its integration, was as strongly built as any territorial fabric could be, owing allegiance to a Constitution with a strong Centre.

Sardar was not a visionary yet he had a vision and an idealism which was

coloured not by any particular philosophy or 'ism', so many of which are currently fashionable, but was dominated only by one 'ism', to my mind, the best of all, patriotism. His vision of India was that of a United India achieving through team-work and united endeavour the glory and greatness which had been denied to it except for short periods by history but to which its geography, the mind and intellect of its children, its material resources and its unity in diversity fully entitled it. The hand of destiny and the secrifices of its men, women and children had brought it freedom only after more than a century of British rule and centuries of chequered history. His mind went even beyond the geographical frontiers of India and was influenced by the countries in the neighbourhood and in South-east India where Indian culture had found a home centuries back and was still a formative force.

To him, the key to united endeavour was provided by a policy of secularism, industrial peace during the period of build-up, organised effort in the field of industrialisation, self-reliance in matters of food and rural prosperity. During the four years after Independence, he dwelt on these problems on a number of occasions. In fact, the need for preserving the freedom secured after a hard and prolonged struggle, the utilisation of the newly won freedom to make up the leeway of the past and the achievement of the destiny to which our natural and human resources beckoned us, figure quite often in his loud thinking and public speeches.

In the main narrative I have mentioned a number of his speeches which indicate his views on various problems that faced the country. I would particularly draw the attention of readers to his famous broadcast on 14 November 1949, which has justly been entitled as the 'blue-print for prosperity'. These will show with what patriotic fervour he entertained the dream of a united and prosperous India, to the progress of which all its citizens in every walk of life—employers, employees, office workers, civil servants, traders and public men—were to bend themselves.

Later in mood of introspection, Sardar turned the searchlight inwards and said:

> We. . . always speak of India's culture, of India's civilisation but do we ever pause to think that the relief of the poor, mutual aid amongst neighbours, charity to the helpless and kindness to the down-trodden have been the shining virtues of that culture and civilisation? Let us ask ourselves if we are living in the spirit of those ancient virtues. If we are honest, we shall point the finger of scorn at all of us who demand their pound of flesh for every seer of corn that they hand over to Government, or, who store up their corn even though they see their next-door neighbour starving. The same applies to those who do not work assiduously to produce more from every inch of their soil, or who not only allow land to go waste but also allow foodgrains to deteriorate.

The Moving Finger was daily writing an account of his achievements which

by August 1950 had assumed almost a legendary aspect. By that time he had broken the deadlock that prevented the country from securing Independence. Freedom had been achieved through a great sacrifice. Partition and the blood of the innocents in the Punjab and elsewhere, in the latter half of 1947, mocked at that freedom but the country stuck to what it could salvage and successfully solved the problem of housing, rehabilitation and resettlement of the refugees. Within a period of six years the face of East Punjab was hardly different from that of the Punjab which the refugees had left behind. Today the lack of prosperity in that area and the achievements of Punjabis, both Hindu and Sikhs, are a tribute to their grit, their industry, their enterprise and their business acumen and their all-round talents. They have virtually written off the past and can confidently look to the future with hope, faith and confidence.

During 1946, prophets of doom were actively presaging anarchy and chaos on the withdrawal of the British from India. The talk of division and Balkanisation was in the air. The task of re-organisation was formidable. The responsibility for ensuring peace and security was forbidding. Dislocation of administration and weakening of the administrative structure were cited as adding seriously to difficulties which were in themselves enough to break the back of free India. Few, if any, apart from Sardar, had a clear idea of how to counter those dangers. He devoted himself assiduously and skilfully to meeting these dangers. By stages, quickly, steadily and surely, he wove the fabric of Indian unity. How difficult was the work involved, he described in his Convocation Address to the Allahabad University.

> Let us turn to the States. I have been the recipient of many congratulations, addresses and tributes on the successful manner in which it has been possible to bring about the whole process of integration and democratisation of the States.But as I have pointed out in my speech at Nagpur, all these are, even if deserved, quite premature. The real task has just begun and that task is to make up for the loss of centuries, to consolidate the gains that we have secured, and to build in them an administrative system, at once strong and efficient. We have to weave new fabrics into old materials : we have to make sure that simultaneously the old and the new are integrated into a pleasing whole—a design which would fit well into the pattern of all India. You will appreciate the immensity and complexity of the task if you bear in mind that in many States even the rudiments of administrative machinery did not and do not exist: in a large number, even local self-governing institutions were either conspicuous by their absence or still in a stage of infancy: popular organisations did not have such far-flung roots as in the rest of the country. Almost over-night we have introduced in these States the superstucture of a modern system of Government. The inspiration and stimulus has been from above rather than from below and unless the transplanted growth takes healthy root in the soil, there would be a danger of collapse and chaos. I should like those over-enthusiasts who feel that the problem of the States has been solved or who are impatient of

further advance calmly to reflect on this true picture that I have given here of the problem as it exists. It will be folly to ignore realities; facts take their revenge if they are not faced squarely and well.

By the middle of 1949 (less than only two years after Independence), he had not only successfully countered the threat of division and Balkanisation, but had forged an unprecedented unity of the country and brought about a legislative, financial, administrative and territorial intergration which none else among his colleagues had thought to be moret han a dream of perhaps a mirage which would recede further as you moved towards it. That miracle which he wrought within a short span of time would remain a record in history, hitherto not or even more approached in the past anywhere in the world; it will also remain permanently a rare, successful and stupendous effort by so few to achieve so much. Sardar's dream, however, was even more comprehensive; he worked for bringing the entire country under one constitutional umbrella which not even the framers of the constitution contemplated. He posed the problem to them with his own solution in August-September 1949 and by 12 October when he made that memorable speech in the Constituent Assembly the deed had been done. He ended that speech by quoting the following extract of a resolution passed by the Congress at Haripura:

> The Congress stands for the same political, social and economic freedom in the States as in the rest of India and considers the States as integral parts of India which cannot be separated. The Puran Swaraj or complete Independence, which is the objective of the Congress, is for the whole of India inclusive of the States, for the integrity and unity of India must be maintained in freedom as it has been maintained in subjection. The only kind of Federation that can be acceptable to the Congress is one in which the States participate as free units, enjoying the same measure of democratic freedom as the rest of India.

It was not enough to make the country united; Sardar visualised India as a haven of peace and security which was essential for its economic progress. The threats to that peace and security were not only internal but external. Junagadh had provided a dangerous foothold for Pakistan. How disastrous it would have been we can imagine when we realise what danger Pakistan poses without such foothold. The problem was so astutely liquidated that the Pakistani *Dewan* himself felt he had enough and gave up the ghost. Then came the threats of subversion by communal forces. He successfully curbed them. Then followed the danger from Hyderabad which was aptly described by Sardar as 'an ulcer in the abdomen of India'. The country was cured of that ulcer by an operation. In fact, he had to contend with differences by successfully imposing his will. Then he had to contend with violent subversive elements in Hyderabad, and parts of Bengal and Bombay. He suppressed them with a strong hand. The result was that the country secured peace and quiet which was the envy and admiration not only of the neighbours but

of former Cassandras like Winston Churchill who started by cursing and ended with blessing. One of the visitors to India after Gandhiji's death was General Aung Sang, the leader of the Burmese. He had some contemptuous remarks to make about unsettled conditions in India and proudly referred to the quiet Burma in contrast. Sardar was touched to the quick and told him to wait for a few months. During that period General Aung Sang paid with his life and that of his other colleagues,while India settled down to peace and consolidation.

Summing up these achievements in his Independence Day message on 15 August 1950, Sardar said:

> In the world of today every country has to tread warily along the road to recovery from the legacies of the last war. We have had to be doubly cautious because, in addition to the troubles which a distracted world at large faces today, we had our own peculiar problems, problems which affected the very roots of our existence, tested every fibre of our being, reached on the very fundamentals of our life and touched the very foundations of our infant democracy.
>
> We as Government of course, claim that despite our shortcomings the ship of State has been steered safely through the many rocks and shoals that lay in its course. Whatever the views, I am confident of one thing, namely, that if we have survived, it is because of our own intrinsic efforts, in whatever directions they may have been exerted. We have relied on ourselves, whether in the external or the internal domain, and it is that self-reliance which has enabled us to achieve consolidation at home and prestige abroad.

Sardar was eager, earnest and enthusiastic about realising the country's future. He sincerely felt that with the large ground to be covered in order to make up for the past and achieve a take-off stage for the future, and in the comparatively backward conditions of industrial and agricultural development, it was necessary that there was no wastage of time, effort and resources. In a united endeavour with team-spirit, with a spirit of devotion and dedication and with patriotic fervour, his countrymen should march forward avoiding mutual conflicts and recriminations which only discourage and demoralise. In one word, he was for progress, and progress as quick as possible through cautious enterprise. He held the conviction that any experimentation should be deferred till the country had attained an acceptable measure of prosperity.

He realised that in order to battle against food shortage, rural poverty and industrial backwardness we needed heavy investments for a gigantic effort. He wanted to mobilise resources by inducement and incentives and not, unless the State was forced into it, by compulsion through heavy taxation. Often he repeated the plain and obvious fact that before we can distribute in order to make the wealth go round we must produce it and that it would be unwise to shut off means of production merely to put an end to capitalism. His approach towards capital was that it was an indispensable instrument of industrial

enterprise and must be treated as a willing servant who should be encouraged to render service and not treated in a manner that would make it sluggish and disinclined to put forth its best. He conceded Labour's legitimate claim to fair wages but insisted on maximum efforts towards increased production and wanted it to eschew strikes and accept arbitration as the ultimate method of settling disputes which could not be resolved by mutual understanding.

It was this philosophy of national enterprise in internal affairs which he preached throughout his life but particularly so during the last four years during which he was charged with the responsibility for national affairs. In external affairs he was a believer in collective endeavour, in mutual help and in a foreign policy based on national interests. His golden rule in international affairs was to speak only when necessary, to keep always national interests in view, and not to be tied down to any particular bloc so as to retain both manoeuvrability and options. He wanted to maintain an eclectic attitude in international co-operation so as to benefit from the best in every country without surrendering the freedom of choice. It was on this philosophy and these beliefs that he wanted to build India's future of glory and greatness and to secure a place for it in the comity of nations, which would enable it to command both respect and influence which would be utilised for universal good and *not* for exploitation or confliet.

During the last four years of his life he remrakably succeeded in confounding India's critics and enemies and in thwarting the dangers that threatened independent India at its birth. What is more, so many significant steps had been taken in the economic domain that it can be safely stated that there was a favourable situation for a leap forward on sufficiently enterprising lines without the risk of a fall from 'vaulting ambition overleaping itself'. Thus, at his death, he had transferred to his successors a legacy of strong, united and integrated India with a well thought out Constitution and economically a favourable entity for progress on judicious lines, wedded to policies which promised a successful journey to the cherished economic goals. A wave of cautious optimism ruled over the country which enjoyed peace and security that were in strange contrast to the India as he inherited from the British. Notwithstanding the setback we had received over Kashmir in international affairs, we had carved out our own line in foreign affairs and had secured a position of dignity and respect among the countries of the world, in contrast to the appendage to Great Britain which we were only four years ago.

Thus the four corners of Sardar's policy were, (1) unity and integration (2) peace and security (3) planned economic progress according to capacity and resources through united endeavour, industrial peace and self-reliance (4) foreign relations motivated by our security and economic needs. In his own life-time he had achieved (1) and (2), laid the foundations of and provided guidelines for (3) including a plan for self-reliance in sugar, cotton and jute, and insofar as he could, he exercised his influence in the discussions relating to (4).

But the history of India since his death has followed a different course. The reorganisation of States since 1950 has undoubtedly resulted in erosions

into that unity and integration. We had the first attempt at reorientation in 1951 when Pandit Nehru endowed smaller States of the Union Territories with the trappings of democracy. He was soon disillusioned and as a result of the recommendations of States Reorganisation Committee report, he took the country in reverse gear so far as the smaller States were concerned. At the same time, he abandoned the approach of the Constituent Assembly based on the JVP report in respect of linguistic States and created the twin problems of linguistic States and linguism. We passed through very critical periods of rioting and disorder consequential to raising the demon of linguism. Partly under these fears and partly because of political weakness, we have allowed much weightage to States in the realm of Centre-States relationship. In 1964-65, we went back on the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Committee and have since again introduced responsible democratic set-up in most States—a setup which lacks in political education, depends on central doles to cover large deficits and is administratively weak and dependent. In the process of meeting local opinion and aspirations, we have gone a step further and made almost all of them full-fledged States with constitutional autonomy technically, because ultimately the degree of satisfaction of their Oliver Twist-like hunger depends on their political pull with the Centre. With the progressive erosion into the strength of the Centre, the implementation of economic plans and policies in States has ceased to be as centrally directed and straight as it was in the first and second Plans, and consequently there have been either large wastages or reductions of funds or efforts or there has been non-utilisation and failure to reach the targets. Mounting overdrafts from the Reserve Bank and increasing deficit financing are both the result of considerable abdication of Central functions as a result of a weakening Centre. Whether and when the process will stop is a matter of speculation and lies in the laps of the future. There are some signs now of a reverse tendency at least in the Congress-governed States but these tendencies may lose their way in the desert-sands of vacillation, need for compromise, and lack of determination at the level of Central leadership. The days of a strong Centre which was the watch-dog of progress and kept the States on a more or less straight and predetermined course, are long past and with the weakening of the administrative structure and deterioration in the quality of administrative personnel and increasing political pressures on administration, it is doubtful if the lost ground can ever be retrieved or we can chart out the future course of the Ship of State on really progressive lines.

On the economic front, by the time Sardar was called away by the hand of death, so many important steps had been taken to break away from the slow pace of development in the past. Industrial policy defining the role of the private and public sectors and the lines on which industrial structure should develop and industrial expansion should take place, had been announced; a progressive labour legislation had been enacted; agreement had been reached on the utilisation of sterling balances which had accumulated to more than 700 crores; and to overcome the handicaps which sugar, jute and cotton industries had to face as a result of Partition, a programme of self-sufficiency

had been approved and was actually under implementation. An accelerated pace of development had set in agriculture and other nation-building activities. The Planning Commission had also come into being and the whole idea of planned economy had been sold to the Chief Ministers by Sardar himself at a conference convened for the purpose. An objective study of the economic conditions prior to 1 April 1951 when the first Five Year Plan commenced would show that the country was well-conditioned and well-prepared for planned development. What was required was a series of Five Year Plans based on a realistic assessment of needs, resources and capacity and a pragmatic approach to the problems of development at an increased pace.

I would like to review the progress between two decades—1951-1961 and 1961-1971. In the first decade, our population grew at the rate of 2.0 per cent. In the other decade, thanks to schemes of family planning it grew at the rate of 2.2 per cent. During the first decade we registered a fall of only .7 per cent in the rural population; in the second decade this rate came down by 2 per cent. We must thank our people for these small mercies; even a small reduction in the burden on land should be welcome. The percentage of our working force went up by 4 per cent, i.e. from 39.1 per cent to 43 per cent in the first decade; in the second decade it came down to 33.5 per cent—a tribute to our schemes for increased employment. In the first decade, the percentage of cultivators rose from 50.1 per cent to 52.8 per cent; in the latter decade it came down to 42 per cent. On the other hand, the percentage of agricultural labour came down from 19.7 per cent to 16.7 per cent but rose in the second decade to 25.7 per cent—the conversion of cultivators into agricultural labour on this scale heralds the success of our land reforms. There is however welcome relief though on a small scale in that while industrial labour increased from 30.2 per cent to only 30.5 per cent in the first decade, in the second decade it increased from 30.5 to 31.4 per cent. However, as regards industrial production, while between 1951 and 1961 we registered an increase of 81.2 per cent between 1961 and 1970 we registered an increase of only 70 per cent, three years in this decade constituting a period of complete stagnation. As regards agriculture, the gross area under irrigation increased from 22.6 million hectares to 28 million, but between 1961 and 1971 it increased from 28 to 33.1 million hectares. Between 1950-51 and 1960-61, the total net cropped area rose from 132 million hectares to 152·8 million but between 1960-61 and 1967-68 it rose only to 163 million. The index number of agricultural production rose from 95·6 in 1950-51 to 142 in 1961-62 but it rose only to 169 by 1969-70. Between 1950-51 and 1960-61, per capita availability of foodgrains increased from 394·1 to 467.8 but by 1970 it came down to 445·2. The percentage of literacy rose from 16·6 per cent in 1951 to 24 per cent in 1968 but it went up to only 29.3 per cent by 1971.

Let us compare these achievements with those of other countries. Among the developing economies, India in the decade 1950-60 showed an annual percentage growth of 3·5 which lower than that of Burma but slighly higher than that of Ceylon and well above that of Pakistan. All the other countries in this group of developing economies except Chile and Argentina registered

a higher rate of growth, U. A. R. being as high as 12.6 per cent. Our rate of growth was much lower than that of any other centrally planned economy which includes all East European countries—Albania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Reviewing the Index number of per capita product at constant prices, while we have registered an increase from 87 to 101 between 1955 and 1968, other countries including Pakistan have registered better progress. Even if we compare our rate of growth with the early stages of growth of other countries, we will find that we are at the lowest rung of the ladder. Our percentage of public debt to national income in 1967 which was 20.7 is the highest among the countries which Government publication or statistics have adopted for the purpose. In 1969, 22 per cent of our export earnings from goods and services were utilised for service payment on external official debts. It is the highest percentage among the world countries, being slightly higher than even Pakistan. In the next period 1968-69, the position, as regards statistics quoted earlier, remains more or less the same except that Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon have done better than we have done, during the period 1960-69.

The picture of our development as revealed by these statistics is a depressing one. We have certainly moved forward but not as much as we should or could have done, or as other countries with which we can compare ourselves, have done. Our rate of progress has been slowed down in the second decade as against that in the first decade, despite the fact that State socialism, State control over individuals and community and the process of socialisation which was to provide a counter to individual exploitation and inefficiency have expanded. Again, facts tell their own tale. Between 1955-56 and 1960-61, the number of Government Companies increased from 61 to 142 and their paid up capital increased from 660 million rupees to 5470 million rupees; by 1971 it had increased to 20,479 million rupees, outstripping the total paid-up capital of 30,000 public limited companies which stood at 20133 million rupees. However, the share of the public sector in the domestic product increased only from 10.6 to 13.6 while the private sector declined from 89.1 per cent to 86 per cent. In other words, despite a much higher rate of expansion of the public sector its productivity remained at a lower level than that of the private sector. Lest I should be understood as opposed to expansion of the public sector, I should like to state categorically that I am convinced that there is considerable scope for healthy expansion of the public sector, that there are fields in which the private sector cannot and should not operate and that, having regard to the shyness of private capital and in the public interests, certain branches of economic activity have to be reserved for the public sector. But public sector does not necessarily mean an administrator-run or Government paid technologists-run undertaking. With merit and efficiency as the catchword, there is considerable scope for relaxation of departmental control over this sector.

Let us now review the public debt of our country. We started our Independence with a sterling balance of more than 700 crores; but according to the latest figures, however, the total permanent debt raised in India would

amount to 7,328 crores. If we analyse the figures with reference to the two decades, which I have adopted for the purpose of analysis earlier, it would be found that the debt raised in India increased by 1,100 crores and the debt raised outside India by 761 crores in the first decade Between 1960-61 and 1971-72, however, we raised internally a debt of 2,400 crores and externally a debt of 6,700 crores. It is clear from a further analysis that proportionately less results have been achieved in the improvement of our economy despite the much higher loans raised in the country and abroad during the latter decade .The total liabilities of the Central Government at the end of 1972-73 stood at about 23,000 crores. Of these liabilities, capital outlay on departmental undertaking comes to nearly 4,600 crores. Other capital outlay including defence services, public works and State schemes involves nearly 3,400 crores. Loans to State Governments, Union Territories, foreign Governments and other parties amount to nearly 11,000 crores. The profitability of departmental undertakings, can be illustrated with reference to the following figures. Departmental undertakings, of which the Railways and the Posts and Telegraphs claim the largest share of nearly 3,711 crores, are expected to yield a profit of 61 crores. Other departmental undertakings involving an investment of 160 crores are expected to yield a dividend of 92 lakhs. Running concerns involving an investment of 1,758 crores are expected to yield a profit of 16 crores, whereas promotional and developmental undertakings involving an investment of more than 21 crores are likely to yield a return of only 9 lakhs. Thus a total investment of nearly 8,500 crores is expected to yield a net profit of less than 100 crores.

On the basis of announced policies and measures, an impression has grown that, whereas the socialist countries the world over order their economy on the basis of creation of more wealth, sharing it equitably with the individual to the extent it is due to him and his efforts and using it for social purposes and thus providing for the economic prosperity of the population, our own brand of socialism appears to attach more prominence to extinction of wealth than its creation and to State socialism than to profitable utilisation of wealth for social purposes. In the process, many important economic laws are being sacrificed to what passes for inexorable ideological demands. Many pious declarations in the past in favour of planning from the grass roots did contain some inkling of the overall importance of basic conditions. However, planning has gone awry, a fact which has been admitted, whether directly or indirectly, largely because this basic principle of planning has not received adequate recognition in the different plans. Instead, on the facts of the situation have been superimposed, sometimes leading to their obliteration, ideas which did not fit into those facts or to which these facts were strangers. Even a superficial study of the different Five Year Soviet Plans would show that facts and targets have been harmoniously integrated into the evolution of policies and implementation of programmes. Successful planning in other countries has also proceeded in the same way. In all these countries the growth in the economy, that has been achieved has been due to the constructive approach which Governments have made to the problems of development

and the stimuli they have provided for increased earnings and for savings and investment and for individual and collective exertions. Various incentives have been provided which would keep up at an increased rate of growth in comparison with the increase in population, thereby securing a larger and larger amount of individual and national well-being. These have accompanied a realistic assessment and mobilisation of human and natural resources and their utilisation.

The picture of the Indian economic landscape formed as a result of the various plans is thus different from the economic landscape of so many other countries. We have made a fetish of so many things that very often the pace of industrialisation has been slowed down and industrial production has occasionally suffered from stagnation. The Policy of increasing wages without regard for productivity has taken a severe toll of profitability with its painful effect on capital formation and development, apart from the rising spiral of prices. Even in the matter of industrial planning, so many uneconomic considerations have had their play that they have substantially affected its economics. Urban development has been very often unplanned, resulting in slum and sub-development areas which are not only an eyesore but also display to any observer the visible proof of comparative poverty in urban areas. Migratory labour from rural areas which is either seasonal or temporary, has further accentuated the problem of economic growth. The burden on villages is, if at all, only insignificantly reduced. It has created many other problems in the cities and towns which are not conducive to healthy development and growth. Apart from these factors, there has been no conscious linking between industrial and agricultural development in a manner which would make them complementary to each other instead of isolating them from each other.

With the materialistic concept of life becoming more and more influential in shaping the minds of men and with those minds becoming more and more impatient of achievements and, out of disillusionment, likely to become a prey to destructive policies, the only choice before us is to act and act in a scientifically planned manner, quickly and in terms of progress, to be achieved within the foreseeable future. We do not have the time to waste on disputes over 'isms'. What is necessary is to determine what is good for the country, irrespective of the pattern of philosophy that might be assigned by those who take delight in polemics. Let us remember poet Tagore's saying, 'Human nature being elastic, when the rebound comes, the disillusionment leaves behind a desert track of demoralisation and degeneration'.

In the old days of pathetic contentment, such a disillusionment was not a problem; but now discontent is both active and alert and there are people ready to exploit it for their own ends or for the ends of their philosophy. Those who are at the helm of affairs and to whom destiny has entrusted the bigger affairs of the State, need to be reminded of a priceless saying of the Gita, 'Whatsoever a great man doeth, that other men also do; the standard he setteth up, by that the people go', and, 'Let no wise man unsettle the mind of ignorant people attached to acting; but acting in harmony with Me let him render all action attractive'.

Thus, despite initial advantages, our progress under a planned economy has not been commensurate with our needs. So many probes have been held in respect of this problem that it is hardly necessary for me to go into details. One fact remains outstanding, planning has come to grief and the Planning Commission of the earlier concept has gone with it. But the fault is not that of the Planning Commission alone or of the bureaucracy which is often made the scapegoat for the inefficiency and shortcomings of others. In my note of dissent on the A.R.C. Report on Personnel Administration, I ventured to state, 'If there have been failures and shortcomings it is not merely the Services which have to be blamed but that blame must be shared by many others, not only in Government but also outside Government. These shortcomings are to be found running through the entire fabric of the country. There may be differences in kind and degree but the fact remains that there has been a failure in a collective sense. So far as the Planning Commission is concerned, as an economist has observed, 'Planning degenerated into a ritual, bowing before idols whose feet of clay had become quite obvious'. But the idols were delivered to the planners by their political masters and when nothing but dark and stern realities faced both the planners and their masters, the planners had to disappear. The instinct of political self-preservation and outward show of consistency, notwithstanding inner belief and realisation to the contrary, made the political masters shy of accepting that their idols were false. There was therefore a constant improvisation of some idols in different forms and garbs and the metamorphosis was justified in the name of popular aspirations and dynamism. That, to my mind, is the explanation for the tragedy that has overtaken our economy ever since the closing stages of the Third Five Year Plan—a tragedy to which pathetic attempts to sell the annual plans and delayed outlines of further planning bear ample witness. Pragmatism, patriotism and practical common-sense dictated a different approach—the approach with some modification, so earnestly placed before the people by Sardar in his day. But the voice that thundered lies still, and the Colossus who strode on this earth amid popular acclaim is residing in other regions far removed from earthly utility. Many since, however, have quietly and sometimes openly thought of and remembered him; many have recalled the magic of his majestic presence. But all of us forget that different solar constellations have taken his place, each with their own orbit and own cluster of planets and meteors; in the process the country has been an undeserved casualty.

The second plank in Sardar's scheme of priorities was peace and security. During his day only one external security danger loomed large, and that was Pakistan. China was still coming up on the horizon to become a real problem, and the dangers of which he forewarned Panditji have been described by me in the narrative. What followed in the late fifties and the shame and disgrace of defeat in 1962 are still fresh in our minds. The 'brother' of those earlier days has turned to be an enemy in the same camp as hostile Pakistan. The main active problem between us and Pakistan was Jammu and Kashmir. I have described the problem and the manner in which it was dealt with. The tragedy of our faith in internationalism runs through the chronicles of that

story; that tragedy persists even today after two stalemates in open conflict, in 1949 and 1965 and our victory in 1971. We may have written off the problem in our books but it is kept in U.N. records and the world does not seem reconciled to leaving it to be settled between us and Pakistan. In any case, the Simla pact has definitely placed it as one of the surviving problems. Thus, the twin dangers from Pakistan and China still threaten us and a major part of our taxation revenues goes to financing our defence machinery rather than towards development. Our police forces are no longer feared or respected but at times are beaten and ridiculed. Anti-social elements and privileged classes, like students, sail under the same colours, thereby illustrating the proverb that misfortune makes strange bed-fellows. The Naga trouble was allowed to rage for years under the shadow of an olive branch, despite the hands of Pakistan and China being clearly visible. The communal virus has again begun to infect the life of the community and threaten its peaceful existence. Authority is not only questioned but openly flouted. Our universities have become, what, in the old days, would have been labelled, hotbeds of treason against the State. Educational institutions do not bring students into a collective system of education but bring them together for collective action against those whose duty it is to educate, or against the police and the public services. Strikes, lockouts, and resultant disorder have become frequent. All these are symptomatic of the erosion of authority under the false banner of democracy and its hand-maid, public opinion. Delays, procrastination and the philosophy of not muzzling barking and vicious dogs have created a sense of bravado and defiance among those who challenge authority or prefer to take public issues and grievances from the forum of democracy to the streets.

In one respect, however, I am happy to record substantial improvement. Since 1962, the strength and power of our armed forces has increased in geometrical proportion as compared to 1947-50. However, we were in a better position *vis-a-vis* Pakistan during those years than we are now. The J & K war of 1947-49 to my mind proved this conclusively. We were then able to push back Pakistan forces much farther than we have been able to do ever since. With some luck we could have been in Muzzaffarabad before we signed the truce on 1 January 1949. I have no doubt that if we had then been authorised to bomb the concentration of Pakistan's regular forces inside the territory of J & K, we would have driven Pakistan forces into what is now known as Azad Kashmir. This was in spite of the fact that we had to deal with the Hyderabad situation in September 1948 and had to prepare for it virtually since March/April of that year. I recognise that in the last war of December 1971 we have been able to liberate Bangladesh in co-operation with Mukti Bahini forces but the Pakistan forces in Bangladesh were under severe limitations and handicaps. They were cut off from the mainland supplies. They had a grossly inadequate air force and no command of the seas. Any initiate into the military problems would have thought that any belief in the sustaining power of the Pakistan forces in Bangladesh would be grossly misplaced. In the west, however, where we more or less

fought on equal terms, we could not make much headway. I am mentioning these factors, not from the point of view of belittling the achievements of the armed forces but only to indicate that relatively we did not have that superiority over Pakistan which we had during the earlier years. It is true that at that time we did not have to reckon with the Chinese problem but the developments in Tibet constituted a writing on the wall. Sardar's letter of 7 November 1950 forewarned us of that danger and we should have then realised that we would have to defend our borders against China in course of time. At that time, if instead of demobilisation, we had progressively strengthened our forces, the debacle of 1962 would have been avoided and in fact might never have taken place because one thing the Chinese recognise more than anything else, is the strength of their adversary.

To sum up, therefore, while internally there are many indications of a deteriorating situation, militarily we are much stronger, though comparatively not so well-placed, *vis-a-vis* Pakistan as we were in the period ending 1950. In relation to China, however, we are certainly in a much better position to defend ourselves. With the clearance of the danger from the east so far as Pakistan is concerned the position is even better in relation to China, but not necessarily in relation to Pakistan. It is a moot point, however, whether against China and Pakistan in combination, a contingency which cannot be ruled out in future, we would be in a similar position to what we enjoy in dealing with these countries individually. We, however, have certain obvious gaps. Our quest for bombers and long-range striker aircraft has not yielded any results in spite of a prolonged gestation period, the length of which to my mind has exposed us to a deficiency which could have cost us dear if Pakistan had utilised its air force skilfully in the last war and which might expose us to dangers not experienced so far if there is a repetition of those hostilities. The geography of the western situation should make the position of long-range striker aircraft *vis-a-vis* Pakistan a necessity. Also, we have been neglecting or, if I may say so, dangerously postponing the re-equipment of our Navy. It has been accepted that most of the fleet is not only out of date but needs replacement. We cannot say that we have a modern Navy. If we cannot replace the entire fleet, we can at least make qualitative improvements in limited areas, according to our resources and availability of equipment. We have also to remember that today it is not a question of only guarding the coastline and harbours on the western coast and the sealines in the Arabian Sea but it is a question also of protecting ourselves in the Indian Ocean and in the Bay of Bengal. One may be tempted to ask as to where the funds of all these efforts are to come from. My answer is that the country will make whatever sacrifices are asked for in order to make it militarily strong. It is not the people but the Government which is standing in the way of nuclear development for defence. We were told that the cost is prohibitive. We raised about as much as to meet the Bangladesh crisis. It is the selective attitude of Government and not lack of funds which is standing in the way of diversifying the sources of equipment. It is this particular attitude of Government which is making us depend so prominently on one source of supply. I

have no doubt that a real defence plan of modernisation with a heavy bias in favour of self-reliance is not only likely to be willingly financed by the people themselves, but would ultimately result in industrial expansion which would substantially reduce the incidence of unemployment, solve the problem of industrialisation of backward areas and may also eventually result in the dotting over the countryside of small townships which would absorb a substantial portion of the surplus rural population in gainful employment. We have not yet sufficiently realised the economic possibility of a purposeful defence programme. It is time that we did so. As it is, we have wasted so many years; we cannot afford to waste any more.

During the last twenty-five years in the pursuit of our foreign policy we have passed through many a critical situation which are matters of history or contemporary record. Broadly speaking, we started with open options but gradually got committed so that the options have been dwindling. Wisely we have steered clear of blocs but have gradually got into a situation in which willy-nilly we have to take a line which exposes us to the criticism of a bias in favour of one bloc of powers. It is generally conceded that the foreign policy of a country should be judged in the light of national interests. Today, two categories of national interests are paramount, security and economic development. So far as the problem of security is concerned, it is one of guarding ourselves against external dangers and having good neighbourly relations with countries on, or within reasonable area of, our borders. So far as economic development is concerned, the factors that arise are those of equipment, machinery and know-how that we need to make up our deficiencies, promotion of mutual trade and securing opportunities of investment abroad. A corollary of the last factor in terms of previous history is the interests of Indians settled abroad.

It is recognised that in the defence field we have a long way to go before we can say that we are near self-reliance. We are creeping at a very slow pace towards that goal. In the meantime we have to keep our armed forces fighting fit at a reasonable standard of efficiency. I use the word 'reasonable' advisedly because placed as we are we cannot attain the peak of efficiency. In important items of equipment we are dependent on outside sources. That dependence is increasing with the increase in modernisation and sophistication. This applies to armaments, ammunition and electronic equipment in all the three services. The degree of indigenous production we have achieved so far covers a large number of small items and some big items but in many of these items, certain critical parts or components or raw materials have still to be imported. With the U.S.A. market denied to us and with U.K. and France able to give us only limited supplies due to our foreign exchange difficulties, we have become since 1962 increasingly dependent on U.S.S.R. and East European countries. The future pace of development of indigenous production with the best will in the world cannot attain a speed which can make any early change in the degree of our dependence, however deluding the propaganda served to us from official sources. Organisationally also we are not built to suit our requirements of early selection of what we need and expeditious obtaining of our supplies.

The superior echelons of the armed forces know how difficult and time-consuming it is for them to come to a decision themselves, then for them to get the Defence and Finance Ministries to agree, then to get a decision as to with whom the order should be placed and finally to obtain it within the time available.

If to all these difficulties is added the preference for one country or group of countries, it is inevitable that there should be delays, compromises and progressive sinking into the mud of one source which, for its own reasons would be more willing than others but towards which, even if no strings are outwardly attached, there is bound to be a leaning in other spheres. An example in point is the supplies made by foreign countries to Pakistan. We made so much of a song and dance about U.S.A. supplies to Pakistan but when the U.S.S.R. decided to do the same, we contented ourselves with mere diplomatic protests and representations. Similarly, we made such a case because of certain neutrals imposing a ban on despatch of arms but we could do nothing—not even retaliation in other respects—in respect of Muslim countries actively aiding Pakistan both before and during the conflict. Yet, on one side we have to face Communist China—a one-time brother superior to a friend—against which U.S.S.R. may not be able to help us with any acceptable speed or activity, and on the other, we have Pakistan which is being and would be aided by the China, Iran, Turkey and Arab countries and was and may be helped by the U.S.A. Only one significant gain we have had in recent years and this is the greater friendliness of France and U.K. towards us, and their refusal to toe the line of China and U.S.A. in our conflict with Pakistan. But I venture to suggest that this was more due to the intrinsic advantage of our taking up the cause of an oppressed and suffering Bangladesh than to any suddenly developed sympathy for us.

We rightly decided on a policy of non-alignment, both political and military. On this, both Sardar and Panditji were agreed. Where they differed was on the question of leanings and biases. Sardar was inclined to lean on U.S.A. and Western Europe from the point of view of security and economic needs whereas, because of ideological preferences, Panditji gravitated more and more towards U.S.S.R., China and Indonesia. In his own lifetime he was tragically disillusioned about the last two but his legacy of the first preference has been handed down to his successors. There has consequently been some dilution of our non-alignment. I have the feeling that the U.S.A. and the Western Powers do not have any quarrel with us on the question of non-alignment but they question our preferences and biases, which they cannot attribute to objectivity. Time will show whether we have been wise in putting most of our eggs of defence equipment in one basket and it will remain a moot question whether by suitable adjustment in our defence/foreign policy we could not have avoided it and secured more options. The fact remains that by doing so, we have considerably circumscribed our freedom to obtain supplies from elsewhere as the security-conscious lone supplier can insist on grounds of his own security that there should be no adulteration in certain specific fields. It can also, by offer of second alternatives and more attractive

credit terms, either delay our getting vital supplies or can compel us to accept a qualitative dilution and face quantitative restrictions.

As regards economic development, both Panditji and Sardar realised that we would have to be more dependent on the U.S.A. and the Western Powers. Both were keen on avoiding strings to be attached to their assistance. Panditji was more friendly to Britain than to the U.S.A. and somewhat enamoured of de Gaulle and his France in response to the same compliment from the latter. Quite rightly, he opted for increasing assistance from U.S.S.R. and other countries of Eastern Europe. By the time of Sardar's death, that assistance had not attained any appreciable dimensions and the U.S.A's assistance and that of other Western Powers had not attained the volume it did later. But there is no doubt that Sardar was suspicious of Communist motives in assisting us and realised that sooner than later it might pose security dangers particularly as a result of developing contacts between those countries and the Communists in India. He would have therefore pleaded for a very cautious approach to those countries for assistance. However, one must acknowledge that in certain respects these countries have been more forthcoming and more accommodating to us than the U S.A. or West European countries would ever have been. At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that up-to-date the assistance given by both West Germany and U.K. is almost equal if not equal to that of U.S.S.R., and that but for that enhanced volume of assistance we would not have achieved the progress that we did. Yet, we are more conscious of, or at any rate more grateful to, the latter than the former. What is more, we have got the former aid without much investment in goodwill; we have secured the latter by a heavy investment in goodwill. So far as our future is concerned, there is no doubt that from the example of West Germany, Japan and Italy, the three defeated countries who were in the nadir of their economy at the end of the last world war and who are now in a relatively better state than the U. K. or U. S. A., and of France which seemed a back number among West European countries but has now come to the top, it seems plain that it is possible to benefit more from investing in U. S. goodwill and other countries than in the U. S. S. R. and East European countries. This is not to suggest that we should prefer one at the cost of the other group. What I am trying to convey is that if we conduct our foreign policy in such a way as to keep our options open and utilise freedom of choice and manoeuvrability to our advantage, we are likely to gain much more in the field of economic development than we would by taking the one for granted and compromising ourselves with the other.

Whether a change in the direction of foreign policy consistent with our national interests in defence and economic development can be effected at this stage is another question. To a large extent the U.S.A. and at some stage the U. S. A. and U. K. together have shown a partiality for Pakistan and have provoked or compelled us into the course we have adopted. Both had the golden opportunity to pull us out of this course after 1962 but the U. S. promises, including an agreement, were implemented in a niggardly manner. The U. K. did better but not enough. The result was that in 1965 when both took

an attitude unsympathetic if not worse, to India which was the victim of aggression, they could not exploit to their advantage even the slight shift in U.S.S.R.'s attitude on the question of Jammu and Kashmir. In 1971 the U.S.A. among the great powers adopted a pro-China policy; U. K. and France wisely broke away and won India to themselves It may be that the U. S. A. is supremely conscious of its rectitude. Without conceding it, it seems to me plain common sense that in 1971 in the context of atrocities in Bangladesh, there was hardly any propriety on the part of the U. S. A. in projecting the issues of a technical nature. There can be no doubt that at the back of it was the desire to preserve the integrity of Pakistan despite its use of barbaric methods to safeguard it against a determined opposition of the majority of the total population of Pakistan and in spite of the manifest physical drawbacks in keeping its hold on the vast population of East Bengal by military force. It also ignored the obvious fact that in the context of these events, the preservation of Pakistan's integrity meant not support to Pakistan but support to West Pakistan to coerce East Bengal into submission. Whether the U. S. A. would ever have the courage to admit it one does not know, but the fact remains that it played its cards very badly indeed and there is enough credible contemporary evidence to show that the U. S. A.'s top policy-makers were blinded by prejudice in adopting the policy that they did, in opposition to the advice their Ambassador in Delhi tendered to them. The loss of the goodwill of 50 crores of people in the pursuit of the will o'the wisp of technicalities based on past history is surely too much of a price to pay in the world of today, where no country can impose its will on another by running counter to deep-seated popular sentiments.

However that may be, we ourselves have to take a long-term view of our own needs and interests. Our main problems today are poverty, unemployment, rising prices, and in the modern sense, industrial backwardness. When we consider the setting in which these problems have to be solved, the vast and growing population, the large area of the country, its heterogeneity notwithstanding the thin cover of unity, the gaps that have to be filled, the deficiencies that have to be made good and the long distances we have to travel on the road to national well-being, we must frankly admit that we cannot march on that road alone and unaided. Moreover, the resources that are required for such progress cannot be found in our own country. Not only funds but also equipment, know-how and technical assistance would have to be imported from other countries. This is as true of defence as of civilian needs or of the civilian support to defence. But two conditions have to be made certain of. Any import programme must have an in-built item of attaining the maximum degree of self-reliance within the minimum time possible. Similarly, import must be confined to unavoidable items, and wherever indigenous substitutes of acceptable quality are available or can be made available, import must be banned. It is clear that this gigantic effort at attaining an increasing degree of self-reliance and restricting imports to the minimum has to be based on a realistic assessment of our resources, capabilities and needs; there is no room in this effort for false assumptions and false

claims or bravado and empty vaunt. In fact, to make them or indulge in them would be a national disservice. In the light of this assessment we have to determine our import needs and decide upon the countries from which imports have to be made. As far as possible, imports should be linked with exports in order to minimise the chances of adverse balance of payments. Wherever feasible, those countries should be selected which would be prepared to give us the know-how for indigenous production, share with us the technique of development and help us to stand on our own feet. In achieving import substitution outside the field which under the Industrial Policy Resolution is reserved for State enterprise, there should be no inhibition on utilising private sector and joint ventures, reserving the public sector for fields of activity which cannot be catered for by private sector of joint ventures. Also, in determining the parties for private sector and joint ventures, care should be taken to avoid or minimise monopolies, concentration of production in big houses and where this becomes unavoidable, to insist on joint ventures. Both in indigenous production and further import substitution there should be export orientation, wherever feasible. Foreign policy should obviously receive a direction which would promote these efforts.

From the wider angle of promoting our image abroad, of exploiting avenues of foreign exchange earning and of promoting the development of backward countries, we must encourage Indian entrepreneurs to establish manufacturing units outside India, particularly in neighbouring countries, in South East Asia and Africa and even in far off South American countries. We have been tardy in promoting the build-up of this very useful and somewhat profitable channel of goodwill and export promotion. Conversely, we should encourage ventures in the reverse direction, namely, attracting foreign capital into India to the mutual benefit of both countries. In this respect I would particularly emphasise the need of encouraging Arab countries which wish to find an outlet for their enormous oil-produced wealth to invest in useful related ventures in India; particularly where such ventures can meet the needs of those countries as well. Little has been done in these fields as compared to what other countries are doing.

As regards Indians overseas, we are faced with the problem of some of these countries embarking on a regular plan of expulsion. In some cases they are living on sufferance and in other cases the policy is that of gradual reduction of the Indian population. Many of the affluent ones among them have probably transferred their assets to other countries, but a large number do not have such resources to boast of and are at the mercy of fate. They are likely to face ruin either in one blow or will be eventually reduced to penury through gradual exactions. Already from Burma and Ceylon they have had to withdraw in large numbers. They are gradually being squeezed out of East Africa. They are remaining in South Africa at the mercy of Europeans. There is no regard for their contribution to the build-up of the countries in which they have been residing for generations; there is little consideration for the fact that at the time they came to those countries the local population was not in a condition to do what they did. There is also none for the original

state of subjection in which the predecessors of the present generation were when they went and domiciled themselves in these countries. Their comparative betterment, their aloofness, their unwillingness to subordinate themselves to the will of the ruling caste are all 'crimes' for which they are sought to be punished, and the Government of India is unable to come to their rescue. Time was when they could have been encouraged to come, saved a good deal of the wealth they possessed and brought it into this country to invest but we let the opportunity slip, imposed conditions which deterred, and there by compelled so many of them to seek their living or invest their wealth in other countries. We have still a large population of Indians settled in Malaysia, Singapore, other South East Asian countries, Fiji, Trinidad and other islands of West Indies and in some of the northern areas of South America apart from some of the African States. If we do not have an active and imaginative policy to deal with their problems, we would be creating trouble for them and for ourselves.

Thus, whether we look at our problems of security or of economic development including mutual trade or of Indian overseas, the situation is such as must cause concern and anxiety from the long-term point of view notwithstanding any short-term gains we may have made in the past. The concern and anxiety have persisted and will persist in spite of the fact that throughout we have supported the cause of liberation of colonial countries, have always striven to enlarge the boundaries of freedom and have generally exercised our influence on the side of enlightened world objectives of peace and mutual respect for sovereignty and against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and extra-territoriality. We have been understood generally when we have pleaded the cause of other countries but misunderstood when we have pleaded our own. Whether it was the U. N. Security Council dealing with the Jammu and Kashmir problem in 1947-49 or whether it was the same Council dealing with the problem of Pakistani aggression in 1965 or whether it was the Council and the Assembly dealing with the question of Bangladesh and the consequential Pakistani aggression in December 1971, we have failed to win international support for our own case; in fact, in the last case which, apart from political considerations, attracted very basic humanitarian considerations, we have failed to impress the world with the justice of our cause and of the defensive postures we adopted. Even our generous action in unilaterally declaring cease fire could not conquer doubts and overcome scepticism.

The situation is one which requires a considerable amount of self-analysis and objective study as to where we have failed in convincing the outside world of the justice of our national interests, where we have gone wrong in failing to achieve our objectives, why we have not succeeded in exercising our influence effectively. A few incontrovertible facts may help in the process. We gave more attention to Big Powers and big problems, and neglected our neighbours and their and other smaller problems, though these were of intimate concern to the States concerned or to ourselves. We went out of our way to appease the Arab and Middle East countries but failed to exploit their desire for investment in India, e.g., Kuwait and Iran. We embroiled ourselves

too much in problems which we could have let alone, thereby needlessly incurring blame or hostility. We did not sufficiently exploit the economic needs of our neighbours and South East Asian countries in order to win over their sympathies, support and goodwill. We befriended Indonesia but also lost their friendship. We befriended Burma but could not keep it on our side in our disputes with China. We befriended Sri Lanka but could not induce it to give up or modify its anti-Indian policies. Our friendship with Malaysia, after reaching a peak, has suffered a decline. Fortunately our friendship with Singapore has remained unimpaired. We started as friends with China but are now its enemy. Again luckily our friendship with U.S.S.R. has been constantly strengthened. Our stock has gone down in the Arab countries and the Middle East. We have spurned the only country in that area which would have befriended us and given us some support. However, we have strengthened our ties with European countries in recent years. We have scored same success in Canada but have lost ground in the U. S. A. We have alienated most of the African countries though we have supported zealously their cause against Rhodesia and South Africa. The South American countries barring Cuba do not seem to worry much about us or countries outside their hemisphere barring Spain and Portugal and we may leave them out of account in drawing up the balance sheet of our assets and liabilities in foreign affairs. The balance sheet presents a mixed state of affairs and it is necessary in our own national interests that we energetically apply the correctives whenever needed. While it is inevitable that a personal touch should help in the promotion of our interests in foreign affairs such as was available to us during the time of Panditji or is now available because of the popularity of our Prime Minister and the magic effect of her personality, but success in the handling of foreign affairs particularly in the durability of achievements will come from the right use and conduct of institutional agencies and the correct and sound guidance they receive from the fountain-head, rather than from personal popularity or charm. Thus all the three national objectives, political and economic, and safeguarding the interests of Indians overseas have to be served by an integrated foreign policy keeping balance in both ideology and those objectives. Ideology does give more opportunity for winning applause and indulging in emotionalism and sentimentality but this temptation has to be eschewed where national interests so demand. As the Gita has observed, it is better to discharge one's duty, howsoever imperfectly, than the duty of another perfectly discharged; the latter course is full of dangers.

Foreign affairs particularly in their political and economic aspects cannot be divorced from domestic affairs. It is the internal strength and soundness of a country that can give it a voice in international forums, with authority and credibility. It is, therefore, necessary that in our internal affairs we adopt measures and take forward steps which work for strength as a nation. Have we done so in the past? We have uptodate formulated and implemented three Five Year Plans and a number of annual Plans thereafter and then some sort of a Fourth Five Year Plan. Since 1954 we have been giving our Planning a socialistic turn and attempting to bring about a socialistic pattern of

society. Despite the passage of time, however, we remain quite vague about our brand of Socialism and are liable to somewhat similar criticism which Sardar voiced more than thirty years ago or during the immediate post-war years. And where has this pursuit of neo-socialism led us?

Official statistics would show that relatively we have made more progress in the first decade of the last twenty years than we did in the latter period and that the rate at which we have made improvement in per capita income during twenty years shows that we can make significant improvement in our economic condition only in a century rather than in a decade or two, which an impatient but increasingly enlightened public would allow. Our economic improvement does not appear to keep good pace with the growth of our population. During the last three years we have formulated a triple national plank of removal of poverty, elimination of unemployment and bringing down prices. The key to all these is increased production but production has either been stagnant or has been increasing at too slow a pace. To my mind, the greatest bottlenecks have been Government policies. They have failed to induce and sustain the required efforts, and even where serious and earnest efforts have been made they have either been tardy or slow so that the work has been choked by paper chasing and obstacles, and Ministries have worked at cross-purposes. Contradictory ideologies have created confusion and prevented the smooth flow of enterprise and endeavour. We have planned generalities without making sure of the details and allowed too much latitude to debates and discussions at the cost of action and implementation. Our scheme of priorities is based on ideology rather than capacity for achievement. We have divided the country into compartments rather than led it into efforts as a whole through unity and strength. These are not assumptions but constitute a statement of shortcomings which have been voiced from more than one platform by more than one person belonging to different shades of public opinion, officials and spokesman of the ruling party included. The tragedy of these conclusions is writ large on targets unachieved, reforms unrealised funds unutilised, foreign assistance unavailed of and progress unattained. It is not yet too late to learn lessons from this bitter experience. Even though we have lost twenty years, we have not lost the future. A nation of 50 crores of people is no mean asset; the resources of the country are by and large generally adequate. The deficiencies can be made good by suitable investment in national and international goodwill and by a sound approach to the needs of self-reliance, by enlightened policy in regard to imports and exports, and by a build-up of our agriculture and industrial economy purposefully, with a view to reducing the burden on land, minimising rural poverty and under-employment and unemployment, expanding industrial and agricultural production and securing a better balance of population between villages, small townships, cities and big metropolitan concentrations.

These are however current economic issues with which we are faced. There are long-term much bigger problems which we have to solve. The accumulated problems of soil erosion which have a substantial impact on our agricultural economy, and conservation of landscape would cost us thousands of

crores of rupees over a number of years. But the problem is as basic as that of recurring floods which take a heavy toll of rural economy—men, cattle, property and soil. Yet we seem to be living with these problems as though they are an inevitable constituent of our life. We have never tried scientifically and comprehensively to study and break the back of these vast problems. The utilisation of our natural water resources, which we are at present allowing largely to go waste, is also one of high priority It holds a substantial key to rural prosperity particularly in dry areas which constitute nearly 50 per cent of the total cultivable area in the country. There is then the fundamental problem of afforestation which is proceeding apace. This problem is both separate from and allied to that of soil erosion. Lastly there is the vast problem of organising a large network of road and inland water transport so indispensable for the administration of a vast sprawling country like ours. All these problems have to be scientifically studied, broken down into details and then integrated into a long-term plan. A study of the previous plans will show that we have hardly touched the fringe of many of these problems.

The country has chosen that the national objectives, political economic and social, are to be attained through democratic institutions and a democratic way of life. Parliaments and State legislatures, elected on adult franchise, are the instruments for translating national will into action and Central or State Ministries respectively responsible to them are the executive agencies through whom the functions of these democratic institutions are discharged. The Judiciary is the constitutional watchdog to ensure that the legislatures and the executive do not transgress the constitution or the laws of the land. Thus, rule of law is a necessary ingredient of democracy and the democratic way of life. Apart from this constitutional system, the supports of democracy are a well-knit and disciplined ruling party; a responsible opposition strong enough to provide an alternative to the Ruling Party at the time of election or is a change of party government becomes necessary; a free press, informed public opinion and public institutions which will educate and voice public opinion.

At the time of Independence we were fortunate in having a joint leadership which was responsible, self-contained, devoted to democratic traditions and practice and dedicated to a democratic way of life. But the required opposition was lacking and the joint leadership made up for that gap by forming a Government which was truly national in complexion The Constitution-making body, though predominantly a one-party institution, reflected the different points of view in the body politic. Through the responsibility, self-restraint and discipline imposed by that enlightened and forceful joint leadership, the conclusions and decisions of that body, whether in its parliamentary or constitution-making role reflected more the national will than a one-party programme. Since the Congress Party itself was a collection of different opinions out of which a synthesis generally had to be evolved, and since non-party opinions were given weight in the formulation of those conclusions and decisions, the absence of an alternative opposition was not felt so much as would have been the case otherwise. Even after the reconstruction of the Cabinet in May 1950, when non-Congress influences disappeared from its deliberations,

the presence of men like Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, Rajaji, Munshi and Shri Prakash made it more representative of different opinions, and the introduction of fresh blood in the Cabinet contributed to its catholicity. Even the departure of Rajaji in 1951, the transfer of Munshi and Jairamdas Daulatram to the gubernatorial *gaddi* and the death of Gopalaswamy Ayyangar in February 1953, did not cause much dilution in the response of the Cabinet to views other than those of Congressmen. The reason was that Panditji himself, except where anything originated from him, was receptive and amenable to different ideas that appealed to him.

However, after the irrevocable commitment of the Congress Party to a socialistic pattern of society, and under growing pressure from the radical elements in the Party such as those belonging to Socialist Forum or Ginger Group, Panditji became less amenable to suggestions from other sections of public opinion which represented points of view not quite reconcilable with the particularistic views of those who thought that it was their exclusive right and privilege to keep the Socialistic banner flying. The forums of National Defence Council and National Integration Committee which came later did provide some opportunity for other opinions to influence but not shape Government decisions and policies, but within very severe limitations. The fact remained that both the Party and Government became more and more exclusive and divorced from or contemptuous of other opinions. As long as Panditji was at the helm, there was some scope for other opinions to prevail if they met his approval but as his grip over the sceptre began to loosen, the pressures within the Party became less manageable. It was in this situation that to my mind, in desperation he decided upon eliminating 'reactionary' influences through the mechanism of the Kamaraj Plan. It is possible that with this motive was mixed the desire to smoothen the way for the eventual succession of his daughter.

However, that may be, the voice of the Opposition was not negligible, particularly after the 1962 debacle when both Panditji and the Congress Party became vulnerable to Opposition attacks. Thus, when after Panditji's departure Lal Bahadur Shastri succeeded him, he attempted first to close the ranks within the Party. But unfortunately Shri Morarji Desai kept aloof, and consequently without the firm hold on the party and with a vociferous Opposition, Goverment's hold over Parliament weakened and it did submit at times to pressures from the Opposition. His short and meteoric period ended in a grim tragedy and with it went the last chance for a reversal of the adverse trends in the working of Parliament. Shastriji's demise was followed by a slight war of succession; Mrs. Gandhi's candidature was opposed by Morarji Desai but she prevailed with the support of the Congress High Command. However, the votes which Shri Morarji Desai received showed that he could not be ignored.

The 1967 elections, however, came as a shock to the Congress. It lost its massive majority and the leftist Opposition Parties scored significant successes. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and Punjab abandoned the Congress fold for their Governments, and with a much reduced overall majority, in the Parliament, the Centre's hold over the country's affairs weakened.

What is more, in order to maintain peace with non-Congress Governments, Mrs. Gandhi had to resort to concessions. As far as one can guess the factors contributing to the Congress defeat in 1967 were (1) disillusionment of the people with the Congress particularly after the 1962 debacle and the failure of the Plans to achieve any significant improvment in the economic conditions of the country, (2) the weakening hold of the Congress Party on the functioning of the Parliament and the greater prominence that the Opposition wrested from it, (3) the division in the Congress ranks and consequential internal sabotage, (4) Congress complacency, and (5) the people's desire for exploring alternatives. The Congress, however, failed to learn any lessons from the unsatisfactory results of the elections and although the position created by the Kamaraj Plan was retrieved, the divisions in the internal working of the Congress Party and Government continued, and hold of the Opposition over parliamentary business increased. The resultant situation of uncertainty and confusion made matters worse. The country was affected by a continuous wave of demoralisation and scepticism and became increasingly sick of the malaise from which it was suffering.

The relief to the country, however, was not to come in the ordinary course but through a side issue arising out of nomination for the Presidentship of the Union. That issue gave rise to a conflict between the Prime Minister and the Congress High Command which through a gross mismanagement and mishandling of the issue by her adversaries erupted into a first-class crisis which broke the Congress into two. The issue unfortunately got mixed with personalities, and since the opposite set of people passed off in the public mind as the old-timers it was easy for the whole affair to be given as an ideological conflict. The Prime Minister thus acquired a trump card which she skilfully utilised to discredit them and to increase in contrast her own popularity and strength. At first she secured a large majority of the Parliamentary Party on her side; gradually the large majority of the organisation also came over to her side. The process of defections which had begun to corrupt political life affected the Organisation Congress in a substantial measure. The New Congress, as the Prime Minister's supporters were called, went from strength to strength. But the weakness in the Parliamentary forum continued to plague her, and utilising the Supreme Court verdict on the Privy Purse issue, she appealed to the people after dissolving the Parliament and secured an overwhelming majority though not such a massive mandate as is claimed (43 per cent of the votes polled constituting less than 60 per cent of the total electorate). With that majority there was a complete rout of the Opposition and a virtual liquidation of the Old Congress. The subsequent State elections after India's victory over Pakistan in December 1971 strengthened her leadership even more by giving it the colour of a contest between Mrs. Gandhi and the rest, and by the people casting their votes for her in large numbers. The fact of the matter is that today both the country and the Congress have staked their fortunes on her leadership. Never before in the history of the Congress after Independence has such overwhelming success been achieved in the spheres of both the Centre and the States. What is more, the elections

have resulted in the complete defeat of Marxist Communists in West Bengal, and in the change-over in Kerala from a predominat Communist Government to a Coalition Government between CPI and other parties with the Congress lending its support from outside.

This is the bare outline of the events between July 1969 and March 1971 but the whole course of these events was packed with high drama. The Prime Minister by taking the issues away from the internal recesses of the organisation to the people on the basis of a leftist programme, and slogans in harmony with that programme, skilfully played on popular emotions, and kept the audience spellbound. The Opposition played into her hands through a demonstration of its own hollowness; it completely misread the public mind and was over-optimistic as a result of many victories in 1967 elections; nor could it match the superior resources of the Ruling party or the mobility and energy of the Prime Minister. The landslide was more reminiscent of the General Election in U. K. in 1931-32 when there was complete rout of the top leaders of the Labour Party and a victory of their former leader, Ramsay Macdonal in the guise of a predominantly conservative 'National Government'. The sole survivor was Mr. George Lansbery, whose appearance at a debate in the Oxford Union which I attended led a humourist to remark that his success at the polls was 'an illustration of the principle of the survival of the simplest.' Another notable gain of hers in the process has been the return to the presidency of Shri V. V. Giri whom she abandoned for a time in favour of Shri Jagjivan Ram, whose nomination there was little reason for the Congress High Command to reject. She supported him later after having signed support for his rival Shri Sanjeeva Reddy; Shri Giri has certainly obliged the Prime Minister by readily giving consent when it was needed whether he was at Delhi or outside Delhi and in India or outside India.

Thus, with a massive strength in Parliament, an obliging President, and her nominees occupying places of power and prestige in the States and having eliminated rival parties from power in West Bengal, Punjab, Bihar and Kerala her writs can run all over India except one major State, namely Tamil Nadu. She also holds the purse strings and superior constitutional authority in her hands. Despite her strength, however, it is doubtful if dissensions and dissent have been overcome; the radicals are as active as before; some cracks are visible here and there, decision-making is neither easy nor quick or even timely and policies have remained in terms of generalities and have not been successfully translated into detail. Neither poverty nor unemployment has been visibly affected while prices continue to rise; Government seems helpless to deal with the last phenomenon despite the use of brave words and shouting about of drastic remedies. Schemes for providing employment are still in the gestation stage while rural and urban poverty hit the eyes as before. Three years have passed since the triple aims of Government were announced at Bombay; two victories at the polls and one military victory have come her way; eighteen months have elapsed since the last event. But the country has not even seen, let alone turned the corner. In the meantime, time, a rare commodity during a period of growing discontent and disillusionment flies

and Government is unable to catch up with it. How long can the people hold themselves in peace and patience remains to be seen. Many observers are saying that the cup is gradually filling to the brim and a time is not far off when it may not be able 'to hold another drop'. If the Fifth Five Year Plan which is the course of preparation assume the character of another essay in platitudes, nothing but failure and disappointment awaits the people who gave such a massive majority to the ruling party.

It will be for time to show and history to decide the price at which the country has secured undisputed leadership, stability of Government and a significant break with the past. There are however certain trends which are clearly visible. There is no doubt that what have prevailed with the people is not performance but promise, faith in the leadership based on the promise of generalities, and not any detailed concrete programme or achievement. To my mind, voting for Mrs. Gandhi is a great act of faith, the betrayal of which would be a real tragedy both for the Congress and the country, particularly when there is no alternative leadership in view. It is equally sad that the country's fortunes should depend on the personality of own person howsoever pre-eminent he or she may be. The country has once faced a great disaster due to continued faith in the leadership of a great leader and in his policy towards a neighbour. The country's faith in a planned economy has been shaken by lack of adequate performance and progress and the increasing rigours of living. Apart from these risks involved, the Opposition in disarray puts a premium on arbitrariness, one-track measures, and complacency and over-confidence in the ruling party. Such a situation is a breeding ground of frustration and demoralisation which can consitute a challenge to democracy and democratic methods. Instances are not wanting which indicate symptoms of such a challenge brewing.

Added to these symptoms is the manner in which constituted authorities which are safeguards of democracy are being reduced to insignificance or are being subjected to calumnies and threats. Attacks on the judiciary and Presidential consents to measures in unseemly haste provide another sign of danger. Assumption of powers to negate fundamental rights and to oust the jurisdiction of courts in violation of the Rule of Law are also evidence of disregard of matters of permanent value in the pursuit or passing political fancies or temporary gains. Extension of the public sector without any improvement in or consolidation of the area that already exists and in the face of huge losses over investments is again proof of an unsound approach to economic problems in disregard of practical considerations. The manner in which the promises of a 'heaven on earth' as a result of bank nationalisation have come down to earth has shaken public confidence. Both credit and savings are unavailable in adequate measure. Tax evasion, black money and concealed income exist side by side with a system of taxation which is deterrent to honest earnings. The selection of comparatively petty matters like privy purses, princely privileges and service conditions of former members of the Indian Civil Service, when the persons affected can be counted on the fingers, shows the extent to which people are being and can be deluded by calling to

aid slogans of egalitarian society and abolition of privileges and elimination of the feudal order. As if to ridicule the claims, homage is being paid to caste in the selection of candidates, a new privileged class, the Ruling Class is emerging with its own standards of conduct and values, corruption and anti-social practices are rampant and many more important and widespread features of medieval life are being tolerated.

It is distressing to see a liberal and enlightened pragmatist as Mrs. Gandhi is, being misguided into measures which in the long run must recoil on her Government. If we do not make a significant increase in production, if we do not restore economy to a solvent position, if we do not provide for agricultural production to keep in step with increase in population, if we cannot export enough to reduce drastically the problem of balance of payments, if we do not provide employment at a much increased rate and reduce substantially the burden on land, if we cannot solve inter-State disputes, and if we cannot expeditiously begin to deal with the basic problems of draught, flood control, soil erosion, water utilisation and deforestation—to mention only a few—and that too in the near future, her Government and her leadership would not only stand condemned but the last hope of constitutional democracy would have been dashed to the ground. I can testify to the fact that she has sound instincts and sound judgement, she has shown capacity to take decisions, she is supremely conscious of the need of making improvements in the conditions of living of the people and she has a clear perception of the necessity of taking the country forward on the march to prosperity. But the fly in the ointment is her passion for a leftist image, a keen desire to appear among the progressives and to have the reputation for launching a crusade against feudalism, backwardness and obscurantism. One may concede the loftiness of her motives and her patriotic urges but these alone are not enough for the gigantic tasks and responsibilities for the welfare of the people, which she has undertaken. She has to choose the right policies, right methods and right agencies of action. It is time she found out for herself where and how things have gone wrong, why thought and action are not yielding results, why quick improvement is not taking place and why the seed is often falling on stony ground or is being choked by weeds and thorns. Once she has done this, she has ruthlessly to apply the correctives. The country will not easily get the opportunity and the leadership it has at present to get things done for its well-being. With her, the country is also on trial; the country is also on the watch and I hope on the guard. It is my hope that wisdom dawn all round to ensure that united endeavour and team work and to secure that peace and will for action which alone can solve the vast problems of this nation and usher in a bright and glorious future !

As we have seen, many countries, already advanced, are making more rapid progress than we have been able to achieve. The world is becoming more and more scientific and technological. The next twenty, or twenty-five years are going to be those of a changing world, switching over from the traditional forms of energy to new ones. Science and technology will increasingly dominate national and domestic lives, and the needs of the growing

population and diminishing means of satisfaction will pose problems and challenges which we must be prepared and equipped to change. Under the stress of scientific and technological developments, in the search for alternatives and under the pressure of population explosion and attendant problems, internal and external politics not only of our own country but even that of major countries may change. The concentration of foreign currencies, particularly dollars, in the oil-rich Arab countries and as well as Iran may pose a serious problem for the U.S.A. and Western Europe as well as for us. Situated between a solid bloc of such countries, and the not very friendly African countries and hostile Pakistan on one side, and a number of small south Asian countries which could be dominated by a major power hostile to us or by one of them with a vast military strength (North and South Vietnam) on the other, India's own position in Asia and on the Indian Ocean can impose security or economic situations which might not be to our advantage or liking. In such a changing world, we cannot afford to be traditional or complacent or uncalculating, we have to think and plan. We have seriously to consider our rightful place in that changing world and to plan our economy, our administration, our defence, our education and our social order in terms of that rightful place.

This might involve a complete overhaul of our educational system so as to subserve our economic, scientific and technological development, or complete reorganisation and strengthening of our scientific and research base and apparatus, a drastic change in our outlook on 'isms' and ideologies to bring them to practical planes, and a much more comprehensive mobilisation of our human and material resources. All these may in turn involve our having a realistic look at our international relations, both political and economic. The new effects might, as compared with the past, have to be planned on the basis of progress in geometrical and not arithmetical proportions, and might involve disciplines and regimentations which would constitute a mighty break from the policies of apathy, indifference, let-sleeping-dogs-lie attitude, rank emotionalism, wishful thinking and make-believes. The perspective would have to be not in terms of five years but in those of twenty-five years even though we might break the plans down into periods of five years. The administration would have to be geared to requirements, and politics would have to be much less of talk and much more of action. We shall have to cultivate the attitude, not of the frog-in-the-well, but of the denizens of the sea and be prepared to face the tidal waves of pressing problems.

There is one last item on which I feel it my duty to dwell in view of the great emphasis Sardar placed on it. Sardar was conscious of the need of improving the quality of our men both as individuals and as a nation. A sound judge of men as he was, he had a keen insight into our weaknesses and was both brutally frank and forthright in pointing them out and making a plea for their eradication. He had a very pious regard for the pledged word and for a moral approach to our conduct and methods both as a nation and as individuals, and would always strive to evolve a balance between principles and expediency. He genuinely felt that unless we were true to our word and adopted a

moral attitude in our dealings we would be sacrificing ends for the means, the permanent for the transitory, and trees for the wood. That is why he stood for peaceful and persuasive methods of conversion instead of coercion and compulsion, and followed this practice in the case of the princes. He believed that an ounce of generosity will bring in a ton of sacrifice or goodwill; he was proved right and thus confounded critics who urged force and violence. At the same time, he would not hesitate to resort to a surgical operation in order to save the body politic from the rot that would otherwise set in. He strove to translate in politics what he observed in life—to stand by a friend particularly in need, to pay for kindness with service and not to succumb to the temptation of the easy way out of a situation by seeking devious means and escaping from moral commitments. In the process, he never gave a word without meaning to observe it, never gave false hopes, never indulged in sky-high aspirations, kept his feet firmly planted on the ground and through these means pulled the country out of the gigantic difficulties that lay in its path, the slough of despondency in which at times it landed itself, and the morass of problems in which it found itself. He felt deeply hurt when out of expediency and in order to pull British chestnuts out of the fire we recognised China and gave up Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek; he was similarly hurt when we allowed elements in India to create trouble in Nepal. He also felt deeply when in order to appease Sheikh Abdullah we treated the Maharaja rather shabbily. And it was to forestall criticism that he had every agreement with the states put up before the Cabinet and secured its approval.

Yet, what has been the history, since, of agreements which eventually resulted in the whole of India coming under one umbrella, in the elimination of threats to India's security, in making it much stronger than it otherwise would have been, in giving us a better image and standing abroad and in enabling us to plan our economy and progress on an integrated basis? Soon after Sardar's death Panditji in a speech to the Lok Sabha on 7 August 1952 ridiculed the Ministry of States for its fondness for the Princes. Here is the relevant extract of that speech:

> We have got some persons who by the generosity of our States Ministry are still called Rulers. Why, I do not know, because they rule nobody. Our States Ministry, in the last three or four years, has been known for its generosity and I am afraid we shall suffer for that generosity for a long time to come.

After some more time, however, he openly doubted the extent of the price that we had to pay. Both of these expressions of views he gave when only in April 1946 he was prepared to agree to a monarchical form of Government in the States, in the event of their joining Indian Federation. However, wisely he refrained from going back on them though he attributed that sanctity to the fact that Sardar (not the Dominion of India) had entered into these agrements. In return for territories equal to 47 per cent of the present day area, a population equal to one-third of the population of 1961 and vast

properties which the new Governments acquired, we gave them only an annuity of less than 5 crores, certain privileges and immunities and rights of full enjoyment and ownership of private properties. Even on the basis of properties *vis-a-vis* compensation, the price is not too much to pay. While they were prepared to see many things in red colour, the red number-plates hurt them. Exemptions were enjoyed by so many more but those of a few hurt them in the eye; many remnants of feudalism existed but so-called feudalism in ordinary garb was an anathema to them. One could understand the abolition of privileges except those which affected personal liberty and were not blots on the statute-book, namely exemptions from the Arms Act and immunity from legal processes (I have it from those who sponsored the move in the quorumless A.I.C.C. in 1967) but they took away even the privy purse without compensation—an unprecedent act in the annals of India's constitutional history. Even the British regime did not appropriate property or allowances without compensation save for treasonable activities; here the activities were patriotic for which freedom-fighters are being compensated so many years after the deed was done ! Here property was involved for which the principle of just equivalent compensation was enshrined in the constitution (Twenty-fifth Amendment Act). The utter impropriety, immorality, unconstitutionality, and lack of chivalry (dealing with a person in weakness in a differnent manner than when he was in strength) and ingratitude of the transaction begs description.

What is worse is that Parliament has acquired under its assumed constitutional functions powers to perpetuate such action. Taking over property without compensation or with nominal compensation appears to be the vogue and this is regardless of the fact whether it belongs to a multiplicity of shareholders, big or small, or that it contains the investment of a person's life earnings or that it has been created by the sweat of one's brow or the wealth of one's intelligence and those who have been living on the income would be turned on the streets. In the face of such a consecration of an improper attitude, the very sanctity of pledges, commitments and contracts loses its value. If a State commits such perfidy with its citizens it is sowing the seed of confusion, bewilderment, distrust, discredit and negation of all those ties which bind a citizen with guaranteed individual dignity to the State. When I say this, I am not entering a plea for vested interests but I am pleading for the ordinary citizen on whom the Sword of Damocles of acquisition will hang at the mercy of his political opponents in power or of the authority whom he has displeased. If these changes are held justified in the name of the people, the constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights were also given in the self-same name. None but the people can take away what belongs to the people; for taking it away a vague mandate is not enough; the constitutional procedure of many countries requires that for such a drastic change in the fundamentals, the specific consent of the people should be obtained. Without the specific consent of the people it amounts to a fraud on the Constitution and a misuse of the powers of amendment.

What is even worse is that this attitude typifies the scant regard for good

conduct and moral values which is gripping many sections of the population. Today it is no longer a question of defiance of law by individuals or communities but a contempt of law by citizens and authority, whether it is governmental or municipal or corporate. Students can hijack buses with impunity and hold authority to ransom; mobs can stone and injure policemen before the latter can resort to minimum force; the anonymity of the civil servant is openly flouted without his being able to defend himself; the houses of private citizens can be ransacked somewhat in the fashion of Rome after Mark Antony's speech (not having secured the person of Cinna the conspirator, they found Cinna the poet and tore him 'for his bad verses'); managers of factories, Vice-Chancellors, public officials, ministers, M.Ps. and other men holding responsible positions can be gheraoed by unruly elements and get away with it; and as a reward for strikes and loss of production, labour is rewarded with more than doubling of the bonus, wages during strike period and a number of other benefits which can be got out of an obliging authority with an appeal to compassion and commiseration, without even an expression of apology or remorse. Does all this signify a nation on the march to prosperity or a downhill journey to deterioration and ruin? I shall leave the readers to provide an answer.

There is one other problem, namely the generation gap which has raised its head and which in the view of many in authority appears to justify or explain a multiplicity of sins. What is worse is that it acts as a cover for repeated acts of indiscipline, insubordination, violent conduct and anti-social activities including drug addiction and absenteeism from home and classes. The disease is not new though the symptoms have appeared in a much more aggravated form and have acquired the character of an epidemic. All of us in our childhood and youth harboured a feeling of revolt from traditions and domestic or school discipline but we were tamed by parental or school discipline. We never carried our feelings to the point of damaging our studies nor did we look so far ahead as to worry about prospects of employment. It is true that these were more or less assured but the fact remains that the uncertainty of employment was a matter of degree as it is today. Whatever the position may be, the remedy for the problems created out of the generation gap is not submission to its evils or acquiescence in its dark phases but national reconstruction to improve the contents of education, to enforce discipline, to inculcate among children and youth a sense of purpose and responsibility, to overhaul our educational system, institutions and conditions, to instil in students a liking for them and a civic sense, and to expand avenues of employment. It is only a package approach of this type that can take care of the children and the youth and through it the man.

A gap of twenty years separates the account of the narrative and the developments described in this chapter. There is no doubt that the nation is on the crossroads and the choice of the road ahead depends on a resolution of many doubts, an assessment of the current situation and what lies beyond if we follow the path we have done hitherto, a determination to choose the path which brings our goal nearer and nearer, and to proceed on our journey in

comradeship with conviction and faith and with devotion and a sense of dedication. We have to rekindle the patriotic fervour that dominated us during the days of our struggle, and activated us in the first three years of difficulties and critical times after we had won our Independence. We have to re-plan our course, re-fashion our methods and re-orient our ideas so that we can make every citizen give of his best in a purposeful and motivated, united endeavour, making him earn more, give more and invest more and at the same time live well, and through his betterment to contribute to the well-being of his countrymen and fellow citizens. It does not matter what 'ism' we follow so long as it is certain to deliver the goods which we require. What is of paramount importance is to expand our resources, material, human, technical and scientific, to utilise profitably what we have, and thereby bring about increasing self-reliance and greater security and better amenities of life. The key to all this and to our prosperity lies in maximising our industrial and agricultural productivity and reducing the size of our family so that there is more to go round among fewer people. This, to my mind, is the current blue-print of our prosperity which I am earnestly and sincerely commending twenty years after another blueprint was commended by Sardar in his own inimitable style and with much greater authority. The question is, 'will the present Prime Minister rise to the heights her illustrious father and Sardar rose to when faced with proplems no less difficult and complicated and no less challenging than these?' She has the leadership, she has the gifts, she has the will, and she has the opportunity which can make her do so. My fervant prayer is that the Kindly Light will lead her on and that she will see the path with a clear vision.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER FIFTEEN

VALLABHAI PATEL

1, Aurangzeb Road,
New Delhi.
28th October 1950.

I received your letter of the 23rd October. I am very grateful to you for having taken the trouble of writing to me even in the present state of your health. I have been a recipient of affection from you all for so many years. The strong bond of affection has grown and I have received devotion from all of you, from children right up to yourself. Not only that, for several years I have been virtually a limb of your family. Due to your benignness and blessings and owing to their own ability everyone of your family has been always treading the path of progress and I have every hope and earnestly pray that they would always be treading on the same path. Even if our countrymen have not fully grasped all the services that all of you have rendered to the country, when the time comes, the historian and destiny will definitely come to the right conclusion. I have every hope that this will be so. I hope that both of you are feeling better. Jugalkishorji has returned yesterday. I have just met him and got the full report from him.

Raja Baldevdas Birla
Birla House
Lal Ghat
Benares.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Free India is only a child of a year and a half. It has yet to learn to walk; it has to grow, to be strong, and its future depends upon how we build today. Therefore, we have to nurse it properly. It is our great good fortune that we have here a rare opportunity to build our own country in our own fashion. History will record what we are doing today. . . .

The first requisite for building a strong, free India is unity and peace. If there is no unity in the country, it is bound to go down. Therefore we must first of all adjust our differences and behave in such a manner that there is complete harmony and peace in the country. You cannot expect the government continuously to maintain peace by force. It would be an evil day when in this country the Government has to use repressive measures permanently. Today we are passing through a period of crisis and our young men have, in their impatience, not realised that the freedom which has been obtained with great difficulty is likely to be lost or likely to give no benefit, no advantage, if we do not appreciate that our present duty is to unite and consolidate our freedom. . . .

We must all understand that partition is with us. It has come to stay. I honestly believe that it is good for both the new nations to be rid of a perpetual source of trouble and quarrels. In two hundred years of slavery, the administration created a situation in which we began to drift away from each

other. It is good that we have agreed to partition in spite of all its evils; I have never repented my agreeing to partition. From the experience of one year of joint administration when we had not agreed to partition, I know we would have erred grievously and repented if we had not agreed. It would have resulted in a partition not into two countries but into several bits. Therefore, whatever some people may say, I am convinced and I remain conviced that our having agreed to partition has been for the good of the country.

People are impatient; they want more wages for labour. Do they think we want to starve labour? Are we foreigners? Some people say we are capitalist agents. One thing I learnt from Mahatma Gandhi is that a public man should not have any property and I can challenge any Socialist or any Communist to play this game with me. But my quarrel is with those who, contrary to the second part of Mahatmaji's advice to us, want to use violence.

We are living in very difficult times; yet the heart of the country is sound. The whole country knows that we are carrying an unbearable burden. Yet if anyone wants to see what the country thinks let him come to the polls; I am prepared to accept the challenge; I am prepared to vacate as many seats as you like and have a trial of strength. And if you are able to take the country with you, we shall bless you, because the country is not going to follow any path which is foreign to Indian culture and civilisation and the path that Mahatma Gandhi has shown. But I want to ask you why a few people round about the border of Hyderabad are terrorising the people in Krishna district? It is the fault of Congressmen. Are they united? Why are they quarrelling? Why do they not understand their responsibility? We made all kinds of sacrifices all our lives. Why did we make these sacrifices. Let not South India lose its good name and reputation. I appeal to you to realise what is happening. Did you ever imagine that Gandhiji would hear of a Congressman murdering a Congressman, or a Congressman instigating or helping a Communist to murder another Congressman? If the South India Railway is threatened, or if those railwaymen who work in South India are asked to go on strike, have you no responsibility? Everyone in India has to realise that, as a free citizen of India he must shoulder graver and greater responsibility if India is to take its proper place amongst the nations of the world.

Yesterday, I was presented an addrress by the Chambers of Commerce. It was in fact a catalogue of grievances. I had to tell them the unpleasant truth that unless everybody in this country, that is businessmen, labourers, industrialist, students and government, all combine and co-operate, we are not going to make progress. We have not yet put democracy on a sound basis. In a democracy, of course, it is the will of the people that prevails, but the people must have experience to make their own free will felt and must have the responsibility to see that everyone is going to fulfil his obligations.

Let us all put our heads as well as our hands together, tighten up our belts and be prepared to share the sufferings for a while. It is only for a while, because I assure you that the economy of the country is sound; the heart of the country is sound; there is immense wealth in the country. The country is full of mineral resources and wealth. We have simply to use our brains

and our resources to take them out and use them. But it will take time; it is not an easy thing. We shall require experts, machinery and capital goods. If we tide over this short period, India will be flowing with milk and honey.

I am extremely touched by the affection that you have shown me. I have said some things which may be harsh, but however bitter they may be, they are a dose of medicine. In return for your affection, I can only ask you to forgive me if I have said anything harsh; take it as a piece of advice which comes from an honest and humble servant.

The views expressed in that speech was the beginning of his concentrated thinking on the present and the future. His mind was forming concrete ideas regarding the economic problems. His seventy fifth birthday was celebrated throughout the country with great enthusiasm on 31 October 1949. The citizens of Delhi, not to be outdone by Bombay which celebrated it with great eclat the previous year, gave him a grand reception on that occasion and he utilised it to unfold to them some of these ideas. He commenced his speech on a personal note. He said :

I am overwhelmed by the affectionate welcome extended to me. Your good wishes and blessings are an inspiration to me to live and serve. It has been a difficult year for me. For mere bodily troubles, however, I do not care. Dust returns to dust. But the fact that this has been a very difficult year for the country worries me day and night. The coming year may be even more critical One wrong step can bring the country to ruin.

My 74 years are a fairly long life span in a country like India. There is not much time left to me in this world. But what departure could be better than to depart with all the love that you have shown. I can only pray to God to make me everyday more deserving of your blessings as long as I live. But India's leader, our helmsman, is abroad these days Mine is a limited role—to strengthen his hands as long as I can. He is exerting himself to enhance the honour of our country. Of course, it was Gandhiji above all who gained for India a place of honour in the world by the way he lived and still more by the way he died. Next to him, our leader has raised the status of our country by the spirit with which he is doing his work abroad. For true honour, however, and for the protection of our integrity, we should set our house in order. Honour abroad without strength at home cannot last long. We have to live up to the expectations we raise in the world.

You must understand that great sacrifices will be needed to achieve economic independence sacrifices of a nature different from those made in the freedom struggle; and all classes will have to contribute—the farmers, the factory workers, the rich as well as the middle class people who are already hard pressed. The hardship may be less in the case of the rich, even none, let us presume. But in our country rich persons are very few. Ours is a poor country with a sprinkling of the rich. It is no use chasing them all the time. I will deal with them any way you like, but I know we have few men of experience in our country today.

It is the bulk of the people who must tighten their belts. Do not give to the

Government if you cannot afford it. Deposit what you can as a loan. Not only will our future be ensured but industry also will get a boost. Today we do not have enough financial resource for expanding industry and producing wealth. But if each individual makes his contribution in the form of savings, the savings of crores of people will go a long way towards achieving economic independence. There is no other way. From those who are wealthy we will try to get by persuasion. They will not be left out. But you must not say that we should take from them first and you will only follow later.

I have no fear of internal dangers now. Whenever there is danger from outside, the world will share the risk, because the Big Powers, affluent though they are, are always afraid lest another country become more powerful. Gandhiji taught us to shun fear. People of diverse faiths should live together and not quarrel among themselves. It is one thing if some Big Powers clash but small powers cannot cast an evil eye on us. If they do, they will perish. We do not want to attack or coerce or plunder any country. But we want to make our country strong. In this you should all co-operate. If in this work I have your blessing, my life would be more worth living.

The need for concentrated thinking on the economic problems of the country was emphasised by the deterioration in the financial position of the country to which he had to apply his mind soon after his return to Bombay. He found his opportunity when Shyama Prasad Mukerjee asked him to address a conference of businessmen, industrialists and labour leaders which he convened on the 11th November 1949 to consider the problems of increasing production in the country. Much of what he said then is of relevance today and I therefore again take the liberty of reproducing the speech in the appendix.

Our industrialisation, starting at a time of more progressive ideas than characterised the industrial revolution of Europe, has naturally to take note of modern ideas of the relationship between employers and labour and between these and the general community. It has also to take note of what would in the context of 18th century conditions, be severe handicaps and drawbacks. These naturally place limitations on the freedom of individual initiative and enterprise. They naturally circumscribe the limits within which personal ability, talent and competence can function. If you add to these complexities these of international finance and trade movements and the big handicap of foreign domination, you have a picture of difficulties which would make even stout hearts tremble. I am glad to say, however, that through the foresight, the spirit of adventure and the nationalistic fervour of our pioneers of industry in the past, and the interest taken in our industrialisation by a comparatively small band of industrialists, we have been able to establish centres of industrial installations here and there which form the nucleus of our industrial effort today.

There can be no denying the fact that the two world wars have made a tremendous difference to the pace of our progress. The operation of the nationalistic forces in the country has not failed to affect the pace and character of our industrialisation. Nevertheless, I feel that those who try to find fault with our present industrial structure or the policies which generally govern

our conduct in the industrial field will do well to remember that there is another side of the story without which our appreciation of the situation cannot be complete.

There is also another object in my emphasising the difficulties which we have had to face in the process of industrialisation. We are today faced with an economic situation without parallel in our history. After the end of the war we succeeded to an inheritance of substantial foreign balances and a comparatively large cash balance in our own country. Today we find our foreign balances substantially reduced; what is worse, they are locked up in a country which is finding itself in considerable difficulties, and whose economic situation is in many respects worse than our own. Our cash balances have also been largely drained away. The tide of post-war inflation is still breaking on our shores. In foregin trade our imports have been outbalancing our exports, with the result that the currencies which matter to us for our industrial effort are in short supply. Inside the country the spiral of prices has been rising. There is a high level of taxation and we have already placed the last but one straw on the proverbial camel's back. Other countries adopted the role of welfare states when they were substantially more advanced in their industrialisation. We have to adopt that role today when we are hardly on our feet as an industial country. All this has produced a tremendous strain not only on our national exchequer but also on the capacity of industrialists to help themselves.

If we look at the causes which have brought about the present situation, the remedies become obvious. It is quite clear that we cannot go on maintaining such a high level of prices. Prices must, therefore, come down. With our incomes shrinking and the prospect of further shrinkage, unless we stage a quick recovery, we must cut down our expenditure in order to balance our budget. We must build up our resources in those foreign currencies which we so sorely need for our industrial effort. For this we must cut down those imports which are for our immediate purposes unessential, and in this I shall include food imports, because I am convinced that with honest, coordinated and concentrated effort we can make up whatever deficiency in food production there exists today. We must create a sense of confidence both in the investor and in those on whom will fall the great national duty of utilising investments. It is only then that we can successfully implement our efforts to stimulate investments and to ensure that every pie that is saved is utilised in a great national endeavour to stage a recovery from a severe economic *malaise*.

Above all this, however, we must build up our strength not on the basis of temporary palliatives or artificial reductions in prices or stimulation of investment but on surer foundations of increased production and increased wealth of which production is such a great contributory factor. I attach great value to ulilising our present industrial capacity to its maximum degree of efficiency.

I do not think that any government has been able to devise a leak-proof system of taxation. I also acknowledge that the profit motive is a great stimulant

to exertion and rules human conduct in whatever walk of life it may be, whether it is the capitalist, the middle classes, the labour or the agriculturists with whom we may have to deal. At the same time, transcending everything must be a high sense of civic consciousness and national duty. What would riches avail those who have hoarded wealth if the econo mic problems of the country remain unsolved and lead to chaos? Nor would it help Government at all to devise measures which do not bring out all these hoards for utilisation in economic undertakings. After all, we have to realise that the longer these hoards are kept where they are the less chance there is of their yielding any return to the owner and the more distant the prospect for the Government to utilise them in stimulating trade and industry. The problem, therefore, is not merely ethical but also economical. Economics is an intensely practical science and I would urge upon you to look at the practical side of this problem more closely and to evolve remedies whereby we can harness these hidden resources for the purpose of national service. I have always maintained that it is the duty of every citizen who has talent, who has experience and who has ability to give the benefit of these virtues to the nation. I can assure you that if you can put forward constructive suggestions in this regard Government would be only too glad to give their close and earnest consideration to them.

However, as I have already stated, I would not regard temporary palliatives as adequate. They may only succeed in postponing what would, if we do not take action in time, be inevitable. In my judgement the key to our economic situation lies in increased production. The problem of increasing production has to be looked at in two ways. It means a greater utilisation of our industrial capacity at present. It also means that we must not be content with merely utilising what we have, but must explore 'fresh woods and pastures new'. For the expansion of our industrial effort we must obviously have more capital and investments. Increased production would enable us not only to meet the demands of the consumers but also to substantially cut down our imports, thereby saving valuable foreign exchange for other more pressing needs, chief of which would be the import of capital goods which we would require for old or new industrial undertakings. A few industries in which I feel increased production is possible and must be achieved are : steel, cotton textiles, sugar, electrical goods, chemicals, machine tools, paper and cement. The question is largely one of securing sufficient capital and capital goods and the necessary foreign exchange. In laying out our programme, however, our aim must be to survey our resources and to plan them out on the basis of what we can achieve in the near future and to ensure that what we produce goes a long way in reducing our dependence on currencies which we can save in order further to intensify our industrial effort.

The ultimate object of all these efforts must be to attain that industrial efficiency and self-sufficiency by geometrical progression which would increase general prosperity and thereby secure a higher standard of living for the common man. On the basis of this ultimate objective you can devise a plan for what is, immediately or in the near future, practicable. Government, industrialists

and labour could then participate in a great national effort for recovery and reconstruction.

I should now like to say a word to labour. No one realises more keenly than myself what an important and decisive part labour can play in our great industrial effort. I know the difficulties that confront both labour and labour leaders. At the same time, I also realise the gravity of the crisis which faces us today. After all, in our lives, occasions come when we have to put up with difficulties in a spirit of forbearance and fortitude, hoping that as a result of our sacrifices we shall see better days. The foundations of prosperity are often laid on self-denial. Today, when the nation demands sacrifices all round, let labour also make sacrifices and help others to do so; let it be to labour's credit that it has taken the lead and shown the way. If others do not follow, the nation will know how to deal with them. Let them trust the judgement of the nation and those to whom has fallen the duty of leading the nation through the present crisis.

I can claim longer association with organised labour than probably many labour leaders today. I served my apprenticeship under that great leader of men and that great friend of labour, Mahatma Gandhi. His philosophy of labour's relationship with the employer and his practice of the methods which could bring labour its legitimate reward by peaceful and constitutional means were never more needed in India than today. Let labour put its trusts in his philosophy and in his methods which have already paid dividends and which have enabled the labour organisation which grew up under his inspiration to achieve a very substantial measure of success. With faith in these, let labour earnestly take to a full measure of participation in increased production, so that it can have more on which to lay its claim than what can be distributed between itself and the employer today. Let it first participate in creating wealth before claiming its just share. Let it regard 'go-slow tactics' as inimical to its interests and those of the nation. Today, he serves the nation best who produces most and none is a worse enemy of the country than he who retards the process of production.

Finally, let me appeal to you all, labour and industrialists, capitalists and shareholders alike, to grasp fully the nature and extent of the difficulties with which we are faced. The situation is such that we cannot stand any further deterioration. Any resultant uncertainties or confusion are not going to help anyone of us; they will only be exploited by those for whom there is neither the sanctity of life nor of property.

By this time the Prime Minister was due to return. 14th November was his birthday and he was returning the same or the next day. Sardar decided to broadcast to the country the same evening. The speech has been aptly entitled 'The Blue-Print for Prosperity' for a masterly survey of the country's problems and for a prescription of the remedies and their solution, the speech would be hard to beat in the annals of post-Independence economic history.

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